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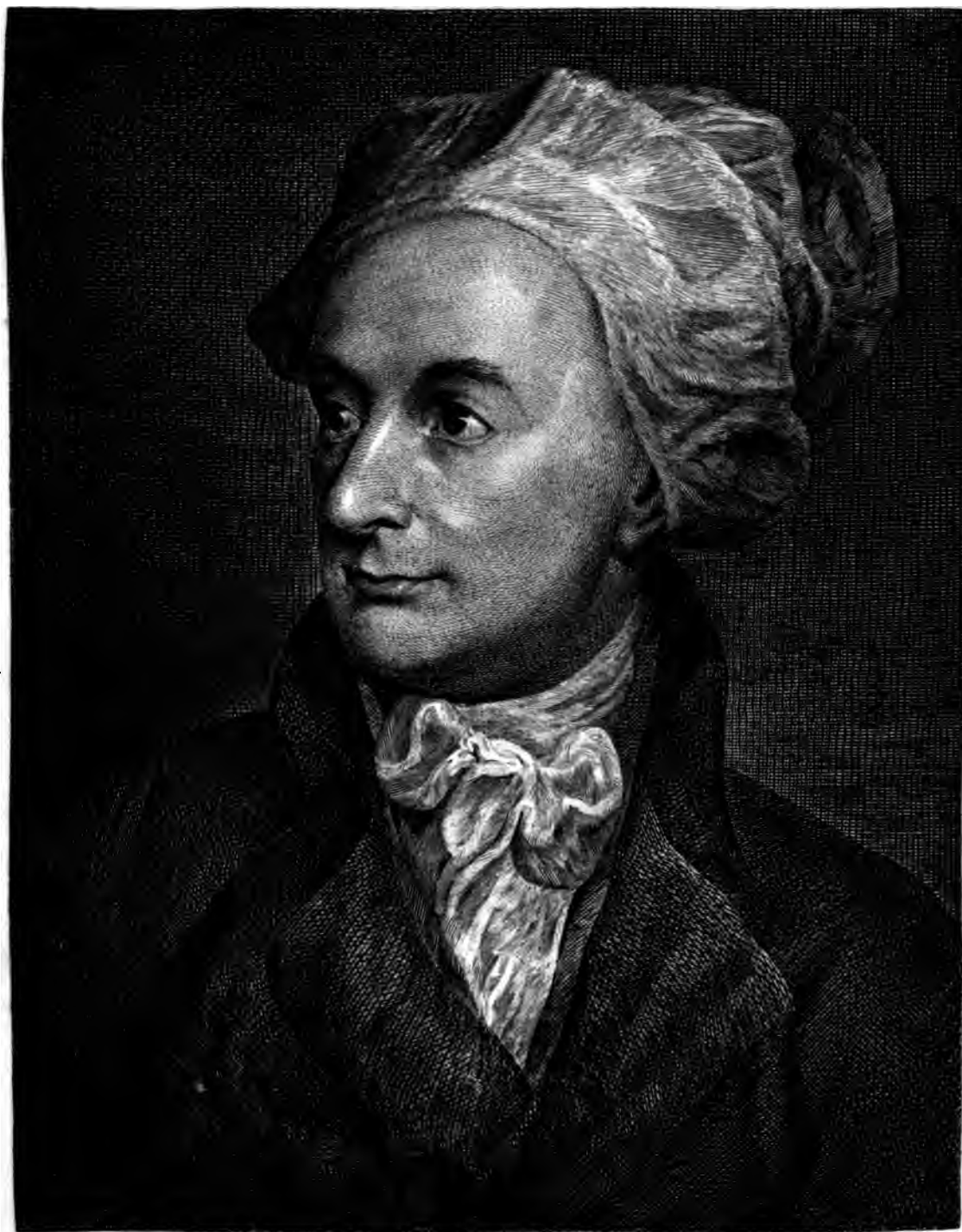
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From a Portrait in Gray's Drawn from the Life by Romney in 1792 Engraved by W Blake 1802

WILLIAM , COWPER .

Carminc Nobilem

Publicatio . A . m . e . m . b . i . s . 1802 . in . J . J . n . s . o . n . S . t . P . a . u . l . i . C . h . u . r . c . h . a .

THE
L I F E,
AND
POSTHUMOUS WRITINGS,
OF
WILLIAM COWPER, ESQR.
WITH AN
INTRODUCTORY LETTER,
TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE EARL COWPER.

BY WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQR.

“Oversatur oculis ille vir, quo neminem ætas nostra graviorem, sanctiorem, subtiliorem
“denique tulit: quem ego quum ex admiratione diligere cœpissem, quod evenire contra solet,
“magis admiratus sum, postquam penitus inspexi. Inspexi enim penitus: nihil a me ille secretum,
“non jocularare, non serium, non triste, non lætum.”

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SECOND EDITION.

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1803.

VVW



Handwritten text, possibly a signature or a set of initials, located in the lower-left quadrant of the page. The text is written in a cursive or script style and is somewhat faded.

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AN
INTRODUCTORY LETTER

TO THE

Right Honourable Earl COWPER.

YOUR family, my Lord, our country itself, and the whole literary world, sustained such a loss in the death of that amiable Man, and enchanting Author, who forms the subject of these Volumes, as inspired the friends of genius and virtue with universal concern. It soon became a general wish, that some authentic, and copious memorial of a character so highly interesting should be produced with all becoming dispatch; not only to render due honour to the dead, but to alleviate the regret of a nation taking a just, and liberal pride in the reputation of a Poet, who had obtained, and deserved, her applause, her esteem, her affection. If this laudable wish was very sensibly felt by the Public at large, it glowed with peculiar warmth and eagerness in the bosom of the few, who had been so fortunate as to enjoy an intimacy with Cowper in some unclouded periods of his life, and who knew from such an intimacy, that a lively sweetness,

and sanctity of spirit, were as truly the characteristics of his social enjoyments, as they are allowed to constitute a principal charm in his poetical productions.—It has justly been regarded as a signal blessing to have possessed the perfect esteem, and confidence of such a man ; and not long after his decease, one of his particular friends presumed to suggest to an accomplished Lady, nearly related both to him, and to your Lordship, that she herself might be the Biographer the most worthy of the Poet. The long intimacy and correspondence which she enjoyed with him from their lively hours of infantine friendship, to the dark evening of his wonderfully chequered life ; her cultivated and affectionate mind, which led her to take peculiar delight and interest in the merit and the reputation of his writings, and lastly that generous attachment to her afflicted Relation, which induced her to watch over his disordered health, in a period of its most calamitous depression, these circumstances united seemed to render it desirable that she should assume the office of Cowper's Biographer, having such advantages for the perfect execution of that very delicate office, as perhaps no other memorialist could possess in an equal degree. For the interest of literature, and for the honour of many poets, whose memories have suffered from some biographers of a very different description,

tion, we may wish that the extensive series of poetical biography had been frequently enriched by the memoirs of such remembrancers, as feel only the influence of tenderness and truth.—Some poets indeed of recent times have been happy in this most desirable advantage. The Scottish favourite of nature, the tender and impetuous Burns, has found in Dr. Currie an ingenuous, eloquent, affectionate biographer; and in a Lady also (whose memoir of her friend the Bard is very properly annexed to his life) a zealous, and graceful advocate, singularly happy in vindicating his character from invidious detraction. We may observe, to the honour of Scotland, that her national enthusiasm has for some years been very laudably exerted in cherishing the memory of her departed poets.—But to return to the Lady, who gave rise to this remark! The natural diffidence of her sex, uniting with extreme delicacy of health, induced her (eager as she is to promote the celebrity of her deceased Relation) to shrink from the idea of submitting herself, as an Author, to the formidable eye of the Public. Her knowledge of the very cordial regard, with which Cowper has honoured me, as one of his most confidential friends, led her to request, that she might assign to me that arduous office, which she candidly confessed she had not the resolution to assume. She confided

to

to my care such materials for the work in question, as her affinity to the deceased had thrown into her hands.—In receiving a collection of many private Letters, and of several posthumous little Poems, in the well-known characters of that beloved Correspondent, at the sight of whose hand I have often exulted, I felt the blended emotions of melancholy regret, and of awful pleasure. Yes! I was pleased that these affecting papers were entrusted to my care, because some incidents induce me to believe, that if their revered Author had been solicited to appoint a Biographer for himself, he would have assigned to me this honourable task: Yet honourable as I considered it, I was perfectly aware of the difficulties, and the dangers attending it: One danger indeed appeared to me of such a nature, as to require perpetual caution, as I advanced: I mean the danger of being led, in writing as the Biographer of my Friend, to speak infinitely too much of myself. To avoid the offensive failing of egotism, I had resolved at first to make no inconsiderable sacrifice; and to suppress in his Letters every particle of praise bestowed upon myself. I soon found it impossible to do so without injuring the tender and generous spirit of my Friend. I have therefore suffered many expressions of
his

his affectionate partiality towards me to appear, at the hazard of being censured for inordinate vanity.—To obviate such a censure, I will only say, that I have endeavoured to execute what I regard as a mournful duty, as if I were under the immediate and visible direction of the most pure, the most truly modest, and the most gracefully virtuous mind, that I had ever the happiness of knowing in the form of a manly friend. It is certainly my wish that these Volumes may obtain the entire approbation of the world, but it is infinitely more my desire and ambition to render them exactly such, as I think most likely to gratify the conscious spirit of Cowper himself, in a superior existence.—The person who recommended it to his female Relation to continue her exemplary regard to the Poet by appearing as his biographer, advised her to relate the particulars of his Life in the form of Letters addressed to your Lordship.—He cited, on the occasion, a striking passage from the Memoirs of Gibbon, in which that great historian pays a just and a splendid compliment to one of the early English poets, who, in the tenderness, and purity of his heart, and in the vivid powers of description, may be thought to resemble Cowper.—The passage I allude to is this:—

„The nobility of the Spencers has been illustrated and enriched by the

trophies of Marlborough, but I exhort them to consider the Fairy Queen as the most precious jewel of their coronet." If this lively metaphor is just in every point of view, we may regard The Task as a jewel of pre-eminent lustre in the coronet belonging to the noble family of Cowper. Under the influence of this idea allow me, my Lord, to address to you such Memoirs of your admirable Relation, as my own intimacy with him, and the kindness of those who knew and loved him most truly, have enabled me to compose! I will tell you, with perfect sincerity, all my motives for addressing them to your Lordship.—First I flatter myself it may be a pleasing, and permit me to say, not an unuseful occupation to an ingenuous young Nobleman, to trace the steps by which a retired man, of the most diffident modesty, whose private virtues did honour to his name, arose to peculiar celebrity.—My second motive is, I own, of a more selfish nature, for I am persuaded, that in addressing my Work to you, I give the Public a satisfactory pledge for the authenticity of my materials.—I will not pretend to say, that I hold it in the power of any title, or affinity, to reflect an additional lustre on the memory of the departed Poet: for I think so highly of poetical distinction, when that distinction is pre-eminently

eminently obtained by genius, piety, and benevolence, that all common honours appear to be eclipsed by a splendor more forcible, and extensive.—Great poets, my Lord, and that I may speak of them, as they deserve, let me say, in the words of Horace,

Primum me illorum, dederim quibus esse Poetas,
Excerptam numero.

Great poets have generally united in their destiny those extremes of good and evil, which Homer, their immortal president, assigns to the bard he describes; and which he exemplified himself in his own person.—Their lives have been frequently chequered by the darkest shades of calamity; but their personal infelicities are nobly compensated by the prevalence and the extent of their renown.—To set this in the most striking point of view, allow me to compare poetical celebrity with the fame acquired by the exertion of different mental powers in the highest department of civil life. The Lord Chancellors of England may be justly regarded among the personages of the modern world, peculiarly exalted by intellectual endowments: with two of these illustrious characters, the Poet, whose life I have endeavoured

voured to delineate, was in some measure connected; being related to one, the immediate ancestor of your Lordship, and being intimate, in early life, with a Chancellor of the present reign, whose elevation to that dignity he has recorded in rhyme. Much respect is due to the legal names of Cowper and of Thurlow. Knowledge, eloquence, and political importance, conspired to aggrandize the men, who added those names to the list of English nobility: yet after the lapse of a few centuries, they will shine only like very distant constellations, merely visible in the vast expanse of history! But, at that time, the Poet, of whom I speak, will continue to sparkle in the eyes of all men, like the radiant star of the evening, perpetually hailed by the voice of gratitude, affection, and delight. There is a principle of unperishable vitality (if I may use such an expression) in the compositions of Cowper; which must ensure to them in future ages, what we have seen them so happily acquire and maintain in the present—universal admiration, and love! His Poetry is to the heart, and the fancy, what the moral Essays of Bacon are to the understanding, a never-cloying feast!

“As if increase of appetite had grown

“By what it fed on.”—

Like

Like them it comes "home to the business and bosom of every man ;" by possessing the rare and double talent to familiarize and endear the most awful subjects, and to dignify the most familiar, the Poet naturally becomes a favourite with readers of every description. His works must interest every nation under Heaven; where his sentiments are understood, and where the feelings of humanity prevail. Yet their Author is eminently an Englishman, in the noblest sense of that honourable appellation.—He loved the constitution; he revered the religion of his country; he was tenderly, and generously alive to her real interest and honour; and perhaps of her many admirable poets, not one has touched her foibles, and celebrated her perfections, with a spirit so truly filial.—But I perceive, that I am in danger of going far beyond my design in this Introductory Letter, for it was my intention not to enter into the merits of his character here, but to inform you in what manner I wish to make that character display itself to my readers, as far as possible, in his own most interesting language.—Perhaps no man ever possessed the powers of description in a higher degree, both in verse and prose. By weaving into the texture of these Memoirs, an extensive selection of his private Letters, and several of his

posthumous Poems, I trust, that a faithful representation of him has been formed, where the most striking features will appear the work of his own inimitable hand. The result of the whole production will, I am confident, establish one most satisfactory truth, interesting to society in general, and to your Lordship in particular! the truth I mean is expressed in the final Verse of an Epitaph, which the hand of friendship inscribed to your excellent Relation:

“ His Virtues form'd the Magic of his Song.

May the affectionate zeal, with which I have endeavoured to render all the justice in my power to his variety of merit, atone for whatever deficiencies may be found in this imperfect attempt, and lead both your Lordship, and our Country, to honour with some degree of approbation.

Your very faithful Servant,

WILLIAM HAYLEY.

THE

THE
LIFE
OF
COWPER.

PART THE FIRST.

INGENIUM PROBITAS, ARTEMQUE MODESTIA VINCIT.

THE Family of COWPER appears to have held, for several centuries, a respectable rank among the merchants and gentry of England. We learn from the life of the first Earl Cowper, in the *Biographia Britannica*, that his ancestors were inhabitants of Sussex, in the reign of Edward the Fourth. The name is found repeatedly among the Sheriffs of London, and John Cowper, who resided as a country gentleman in Kent, was created a Baronet by King Charles the First, in 1641. But the family rose to higher distinction in the beginning of the last century, by the remarkable circumstance of producing two brothers, who both obtained a seat in the House of Peers by eminence in the profession of the law. William, the eldest, became Lord High Chancellor in 1707. Spencer Cowper, the youngest, was appointed Chief Justice of Chester in 1717, and afterwards a Judge in the Court of Common Pleas, being permitted by the particular favour of the King to hold those two offices to the end of his life. He died in Lincoln's

Inn, on the tenth of December, 1728, and has the higher claim to our notice as the immediate ancestor of the Poet. By his first wife, Judith Pennington (whose exemplary character is still revered by her descendants) Judge Cowper left several children; among them a daughter Judith, who at the age of eighteen discovered a striking talent for poetry, in the praise of her cotemporary poets Pope and Hughes. This lady, the wife of Colonel Madan, transmitted her own poetical and devout spirit to her daughter Frances Maria, who was married to her cousin Major Cowper, and whose amiable character will unfold itself in the course of this Work, as the friend and correspondent of her more eminent relation, the second grandchild of the Judge, destined to honour the name of Cowper, by displaying with peculiar purity and fervour, the double enthusiasm of poetry and devotion. The father of the great author to whom I allude, was John Cowper, the Judge's second son, who took his degrees in divinity, was Chaplain to King George the Second, and resided at his Rectory of Great Berkhamstead, in Hertfordshire, the scene of the Poet's infancy, which he has thus commemorated in a singularly beautiful and pathetic composition on the portrait of his mother.

*Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
Children not thine have trod my nurs'ry floor,
And where the Gard'ner Robin, day by day,
Drew me to school along the public way,*

Delighted

*Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapt
 In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capt,
 'Tis now become a history little known,
 That once we called the past'ral house our own.
 Short-lived possession ! but the record fair,
 That memory keeps of all thy kindness there,
 Still outlives many a storm that has effac'd
 A thousand other themes less deeply trac'd.
 Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
 That thou might'st know me safe and warmly laid.
 Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
 The biscuit, or confectionary plumb ;
 The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestowed
 By thy own hand, 'till fresh they shone and glow'd.
 All this, and more endearing still than all,
 Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall ;
 Ne'er roughen'd by those cataraëts and breaks,
 That humour interpos'd too often makes,
 All this, still legible in memory's page,
 And still to be so to my latest age,
 Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
 Such honours to thee as my numbers may.*

The parent whose merits are so feeling recorded by the filial
 tenderness of the Poet, was Ann daughter of Roger Donne, Esqr. of
 Ludham Hall, in Norfolk. This lady, whose family is said to have
 been originally from Wales, was married in the bloom of youth to
 Dr. Cowper; after giving birth to several children, who died in

their infancy, and leaving two sons, William, the immediate subject of this memorial born at Berkhamstead on the 26th of November, N. S. 1731, and John (whose accomplishments and memorable death will be described in the course of this compilation); she died in childbed at the early age of thirty-four, in 1737. It may be wished that the painter employed to preserve a resemblance of such a woman had possessed those powers of graceful and perfect delineation, which in a different art belonged to the pen of her son, but her portrait executed by Heins in oil-colours, on a small scale, is a production infinitely inferior to the very beautiful poem to which it gave rise. Yet such as it is, I apprehend it will gratify my reader to find it in this volume correctly engraved, for what lover of poetry can fail to take an affectionate interest in the mother of Cowper? Those who delight in contemplating the best affections of our nature, will ever admire the tender sensibility with which the Poet has acknowledged his obligations to this amiable mother, in a poem composed more than fifty years after her decease. Readers of this description may find a pleasure in observing how the praise so liberally bestowed on this tender parent, at so late a period is confirmed (if praise so unquestionable may be said to receive confirmation) by another poetical record of her merit, which the hand of affinity and affection bestowed upon her tomb. A record written at a time when the Poet, who was destined to prove in his advanced life her most powerful eulogist, had hardly begun to shew the dawn of that genius, which after years of silent affliction, arose like a star emerging from tempestuous darkness.

The

LIFE OF COWPER.

3

The monument of Mrs. Cowper, erected by her husband in the Chancel of St. Peter's Church at Berkhamstead, contains the following Verses, composed by a young lady, her niece, the late Lady Walsingham.

*Here lies, in early years bereft of life,
The best of mothers, and the kindest wife.
Who neither knew, nor practis'd any art,
Secure in all she wish'd, her husband's heart.
Her love to him still prevalent in death,
Pray'd Heaven to bless him with her latest breath.*

*Still was she studious never to offend,
And glad of an occasion to commend:
With ease would pardon injuries receiv'd,
Nor e'er was chearful, when another griev'd.
Despising state, with her own lot content,
Enjoy'd the comforts of a life well-spent.
Resign'd when Heaven demanded back her breath,
Her mind heroic 'midst the pangs of death.*

*Whoe'er thou art that dost this Tomb draw near,
O stay awhile, and shed a friendly tear,
These lines, tho' weak, are as herself sincere.*

}

The truth and tenderness of this Epitaph will more than compensate with every candid reader the imperfection ascribed to it by its young and modest author.—To have lost a parent of a character so virtuous and endearing, at an early period of his

his childhood, was the prime misfortune of Cowper, and what contributed perhaps in the highest degree to the dark colouring of his subsequent life.—The influence of a good mother on the first years of her children, whether nature has given them peculiar strength, or peculiar delicacy of frame, is equally inestimable: It is the prerogative and the felicity of such a mother to temper the arrogance of the strong, and to dissipate the timidity of the tender. The infancy of Cowper was delicate in no common degree, and his constitution discovered at a very early season that morbid tendency to diffidence, to melancholy, and despair, which darkened as he advanced in years into periodical fits of the most deplorable depression.

It may afford an ample field for useful reflection to observe, in speaking of a child, that he was destined to excite in his progress through life the highest degrees of admiration and of pity—of admiration for mental excellence, and of pity for mental disorder.

We understand human nature too imperfectly to ascertain in what measure the original structure of his frame, and the casual incidents of his life, contributed to the happy perfection of his genius, or to the calamitous eclipses of his effulgent mind. Yet such were the talents, the virtues, and the misfortunes of this wonderful person, that it is hardly possible for Biography, extensive as her province is, to speak of a more interesting individual, or to select a subject on which it may be more difficult to satisfy a variety of readers.

readers. In feeling all the weight of this difficulty, I may still be confident that I shall not utterly disappoint his sincerest admirers, if the success of my endeavours to make him more known, and more beloved, is proportioned, in any degree, to the zeal with which I cultivated his friendship, and to the gratification that I feel in recalling to my own recollection the delightful extent and diversity of his literary powers, with the equally delightful sweetness of his social character.

But the powerful influence of such *récollection* has drawn me imperceptibly from the proper course of my narrative.—I return to the childhood of Cowper. In first quitting the house of his parents, he was sent to a reputable school at Market-Street, in Hertfordshire, under the care of Dr. Pitman, and it is probable that he was removed from it in consequence of an ocular complaint. From a circumstance which he relates of himself at that period, in a letter written to me in 1792, he seems to have been in danger of resembling Milton in the misfortune of blindness, as he resembled him, more happily, in the fervency of a devout and poetical spirit.

“ I have been all my life, says Cowper, subject to inflammations of the eye, and in my boyish days had specks on both that threatened to cover them. My father alarmed for the consequences, sent me to a female Oculist of great renown at that time, in whose house I abode two years, but to no good purpose.

“ pose. From her I went to Westminster school, where at the age
“ of fourteen the small-pox seized me, and proved the better ocu-
“ list of the two, for it delivered me from them all.—Not how-
“ ever from great liableness to inflammation, to which I am in a
“ degree still subject, tho’ much less than formerly, since I have
“ been constant in the use of a hot foot-bath every night, the last
“ thing before going to rest.”

It appears a strange process in education, to send a tender child from a long residence in the house of a female oculist, immediately into all the hardships that a little delicate boy must have to encounter at a public school. But the mother of Cowper was dead, and fathers, though good men, are, in general, utterly unfit to manage their young and tender orphans. The little Cowper was sent to his first school in the year of his mother’s death, and how ill-suited the scene was to his peculiar character, must be evident to all who have heard him describe his sensations in that season of life, which is often, very erroneously, extolled as the happiest period of human existence. He has been frequently heard to lament the persecution that he sustained in his childish years, from the cruelty of his school-fellows, in the two scenes of his education. His own forcible expression, represented him at Westminster as not daring to raise his eye above the shoe-buckle of the elder-boys, who were too apt to tyrannise over his gentle spirit. The acuteness of his feelings in his childhood, rendered those important years (which might have produced, under tender cultivation, a series of lively enjoyments)
miserable

miserable years of increasing timidity and depression, which, in the most cheerful hours of his advanced life, he could hardly describe to an intimate friend, without shuddering at the recollection of his early wretchedness. Yet to this perhaps the world is indebted for the pathetic and moral eloquence of those forcible admonitions to parents, which give interest and beauty to his admirable Poem on Public Schools. Poets may be said to realize, in some measure, the poetical idea of the Nightingale's singing with a thorn at her breast, as their most exquisite songs have often originated in the acuteness of their personal sufferings. Of this obvious truth, the Poem I have just mentioned, is a very memorable example, and if any readers have thought the Poet too severe in his strictures on that system of education, to which we owe some of the most accomplished characters that ever gave celebrity to a civilized nation, such readers will be candidly reconciled to that moral severity of reproof, in recollecting, that it flowed from severe personal experience, united to the purest spirit of philanthropy and patriotism.

Cowper's exhortation to fathers, to educate their own sons, is a model of persuasive eloquence, and not inferior to similar exhortations in the eloquent Rousseau, or in the accomplished translator of Tansillo's poem, the Nurse, by which these enchanting writers have induced, and will continue to induce, so many mothers in polished life to suckle their own children. Yet similar as these exhortations may be esteemed, in their benevolent design, and in their

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graceful expression, there are two powerful reasons, which must, in all probability, prevent their being attended with similar success. In the first place, woman has, in general, much stronger propensity than man to the perfect discharge of parental duties; and secondly, the avocations of men are so imperious, in their different lines of life, that few fathers could command sufficient leisure (if nature furnished them with talents and inclination) to fulfill the arduous office of preceptor to their own children; yet, arduous and irksome as the office is generally thought, there is perhaps no species of mental labour so perfectly sweet in its success: and the Poet justly exclaims:

O 'tis a sight to be with joy perus'd,

A sight surpass'd by none that we can shew!

*A Father blest with an ingenuous Son;
Father, and Friend, and Tutor, all in one.*

Had the constitutional shyness and timidity of Cowper been gradually dispelled by the rare advantage that he describes in these verses, his early years would certainly have been happier; but men, who are partial to public schools, will probably doubt, if any system of private tuition could have proved more favourable to the future display of his genius, than such an education, as he received at Westminster. There, indeed, the peculiar delicacy of his nature might

might expose him to an extraordinary portion of juvenile discomfort, yet he undoubtedly acquired the accomplishment, and the reputation of scholarship; with the advantage of being known and esteemed by some aspiring youths of his own age, who were destined to become conspicuous, and powerful, in the splendid scenes of the world.

With these acquisitions, he left Westminster, at the age of eighteen, in 1749; and as if destiny had determined, that all his early situations in life should be peculiarly irksome to his delicate feelings, and tend rather to promote, than to counteract a constitutional tendency to a morbid sensibility in his frame, he was removed from a public school to the office of an attorney: He resided three years in the house of a Mr. Chapman, to whom he was engaged by articles for that time. Here he was placed for the study of a profession, which nature seemed resolved that he never should practice.

The law is a kind of soldiership, and like the profession of arms, it may be said to require for the constitution of its heroes

"A frame of adamant, a soul of fire."

The soul of Cowper had indeed its fire, but fire so refined and æthelial, that it could not be expected to shine in the gross atmosphere of worldly contention. Perhaps there never existed a mortal, who possessing, with a good person, intellectual powers naturally strong, and highly cultivated, was so utterly unfit to encounter the bustle

and perplexities of public life. But the extreme modesty and shyness of his nature, which disqualified him for scenes of business and ambition, endeared him inexpressibly to those, who had opportunities to enjoy his society, and faculties to appreciate the uncommon excellence of his interesting character.

Reserved as he was, to an extraordinary and painful degree, his heart and mind were yet admirably fashioned by nature for all the refined intercourse, and confidential delights both of friendship and love: but though apparently formed to possess, and to communicate an extraordinary portion of mortal felicity, the incidents of his life were such, that, conspiring with the peculiarities of his nature, they rendered him, at different times, the most unhappy of mankind. The variety and depth of his sufferings, in early life, from extreme tenderness of heart, are very forcibly displayed in the following Verses, which formed part of a letter to one of his female relations, at the time they were composed. The letter has perished; and the verses owe their preservation to the affectionate memory of the lady to whom they were addressed.

*Doom'd, as I am, in solitude to waste
The present moments, and regret the past;
Depriv'd of every joy, I valued most,
My Friend torn from me, and my Mistress lost;
Call not this gloom, I wear, this anxious mien,
The dull effect of humour, or of spleen!*

Still,

*Still, still, I mourn, with each returning day,
Him* snatch'd by fate, in early youth, away.
And Her—thro' tedious years of doubt and pain,
Fix'd in her choice, and faithful—but in vain!
O prone to pity, generous, and sincere,
Whose eye ne'er yet refused the wretch a tear;
Whose heart the real claim of friendship knows,
Nor thinks a lover's are but fancied woes;
See me—ere yet my destin'd course half done,
Cast forth a wand'rer on a wild unknown!
See me neglected on the world's rude coast,
Each dear companion of my voyage lost!
Nor ask why clouds of sorrow shade my brow!
And ready tears wait only leave to flow!
Why all, that soothes a heart, from anguish free,
All that delights the happy—palls with me!*

When he quitted the house of the solicitor, where he was placed to acquire the rudiments of litigation, he settled himself in chambers of the Inner-Temple, as a regular student of law; but altho' he resided there to the age of thirty-three, he rambled (according to his own colloquial account of his early years) from the thorny road of his austere patroness, jurisprudence, into the primrose paths of literature and poetry. Even here his native diffidence confined him to social and subordinate exertions:—He wrote and printed both prose and verse, as the concealed assistant of less diffident

* Sir William Russel, the favourite friend of the young Poet.

fidest authors. During his residence in the Temple, he cultivated the friendship of some eminent literary characters, who had been his school-fellows at Westminster, particularly Colman, Bonnel Thornton, and Lloyd. His regard to the two first induced him to contribute to their periodical publication, entitled the Connoisseur, three excellent papers, which the Reader will find in the Appendix to these volumes, and from which he will perceive, that Cowper had such talents for this pleasant and useful species of composition, as might have rendered him a worthy associate, in such labours, to Addison himself, whose graceful powers have never been surpassed in that province of literature, which may still be considered as peculiarly his own.

The intimacy of Cowper and Lloyd may have given rise perhaps to some early productions of our Poet, which it may now be hardly possible to ascertain;---the probability of this conjecture arises from the necessities of Lloyd, and the affectionate liberality of his friend. As the former was tempted by his narrow finances to engage in periodical works, it is highly probable that the pen of Cowper, ever ready to second the charitable wishes of his heart, might be devoted to the service of an indigent author, whom he appears to have loved with a very cordial affection.—I find that affection agreeably displayed in a sportive poetical epistle, which may claim a place in this volume, not only as an early specimen of Cowper's poetry, but as exhibiting a sketch of his own mind at the age of twenty-three.

AN EPISTLE to ROBERT LLOYD, Esqr. 1754.

*'Tis not that I design to rob
Thee of thy birth-right, gentle Bob,
For thou art born sole heir, and single,
Of dear Mat Prior's easy jingle ;
Nor that I mean, while thus I knit
My thread-bare sentiments together,
To shew my genius, or my wit,
When God and you know, I have neither ;
Or such, as might be better shewn
By letting Poetry alone.*

*'Tis not with either of these views,
That I presume to address the Muse ;
But to divert a fierce banditti,
(Sworn foes to every thing that's witty!)
That, with a black, infernal train,
Make cruel inroads in my brain,
And daily threaten to drive thence
My little garrison of sense :
The fierce banditti, which I mean,
Are gloomy thoughts, led on by spleen.
Then there's another reason yet,
Which is, that I may fairly quit
The debt, which justly became due
The moment, when I heard from you :
And you might grumble, crony mine,
If paid in any other coin :
Since twenty sheets of lead, God knows
(I would say twenty sheets of prose)*

*Can ne'er be deem'd worth half so much
As one of gold, and yours was such.
Thus, the preliminaries settled,
I fairly find myself pitch-kettled ;**
*And cannot see, tho' few see better,
How I shall hammer out a letter.*

*First, for a thought—since all agree—
A thought—I have it—let me see—
'Tis gone again—Plague on't! I thought
I had it—but I have it not.
Dame Gurton thus, and Hodge her son,
That useful thing, her needle, gone ;
Rake well the cinders ;—sweep the floor,
And sift the dust behind the door ;
While eager Hodge beholds the prize
In old Grimalkin's glaring eyes ;
And Gammer finds it on her knees
In every shining straw she sees.
This simile were apt enough ;
But I've another critic-proof!
The Virtuoso thus, at noon,
Broiling beneath a July sun,
The gilded Butterfly pursues,
O'er hedge and ditch, thro' gaps and mews ;*

And

* *Pitch-kettled*, a favorite phrase at the time when this Epistle was written, expressive of being puzzled, or what, in the Spectators' time, would have been called *bamboozled*.

*And after many a vain essay
 To captivate the tempting prey.
 Gives him at length the lucky pat,
 And has him safe, beneath his hat :
 Then lifts it gently from the ground ;
 But ah ! 'tis lost, as soon as found ;
 Culprit his liberty regains ;
 Flits out of sight, and mocks his pains.
 The sense was dark ; 'twas therefore fit
 With simile t' illustrate it ;
 But as too much obscures the sight,
 As often as too little light,
 We have our similies cut short,
 For matters of more grave import.
 That Matthew's numbers run with ease,
 Each man of common-sense agrees ;
 All men of common-sense allow,
 That Robert's lines are easy too :
 Where then the preference shall we place ?
 Or how do justice in this case ?
 Matthew (says Fame) with endless pains
 Smooth'd, and refin'd, the meanest strains ;
 Nor suffer'd one ill-chosen rhyme
 T' escape him, at the idlest time ;
 And thus o'er all a lustre cast,
 That, while the language lives, shall last.
 An't please your Ladyship (quoth I)
 For 'tis my business to reply ;*

*Sure so much labour, so much toil,
Bespeak at least a stubborn soil ;
Theirs be the laurel-wreath decreed,
Who both write well, and write full-speed !
Who throw their Helicon about
As freely, as a conduit spout !
Friend Robert, thus like chien scavant,
Lets fall a poem on passant,
Nor needs his genuine ore refine ;
'Tis ready polish'd from the mine.*

It may be proper to observe, that this lively praise on the playful talent of Lloyd was written six years before that amiable, but unfortunate, Author published the best of his serious poems, "The Actor," a composition of considerable merit, which proved a prelude to the more powerful, and popular, Rosciad of Churchill ; who, after surpassing Lloyd as a rival, assisted him very liberally as a friend. While Cowper resided in the Temple, he seems to have been personally acquainted with the most eminent writers of the time ; and the interest which he probably took in their recent works, tended to increase his powerful, though diffident, passion for poetry, and to train him imperceptibly to that masterly command of language, which time and chance led him to display, almost as a new talent, at the age of fifty. One of his first associates has informed me, that before he quitted London, he frequently amused himself in translation from antient and modern poets, and devoted his composition

composition to the service of any friend who requested it. In a copy of Duncombe's Horace, printed in 1759, I find two of the Satires translated by Cowper. The Duncombes, father and son, were amiable scholars, of a Hertfordshire family; and the elder Duncombe, in his printed letters, mentions Dr. Cowper (the father of the Poet) as one of his friends, who possessed a talent for poetry, exhibiting at the same time a respectable specimen of his verse. The Duncombes, in the preface to their Horace, impute the size of their work to the poetical contributions of their friends. At what time the two Satires, I have mentioned, were translated by William Cowper, I have not been able to ascertain; but they are worthy his pen, and will therefore appear in the Appendix to these volumes.

Speaking of his own early life, in a letter to Mr. Park, (dated March 1792) Cowper says, with that extreme modesty, which was one of his most remarkable characteristics, "From the age of twenty to thirty-three, I was occupied, or ought to have been, in the study of the law; from thirty-three to sixty, I have spent my time in the country, where my reading has been only an apology for idleness, and where, when I had not either a Magazine, or a Review, I was sometimes a Carpenter, at others, a Bird-cage maker, or a Gardener, or a Drawer of Landscapes. At fifty years of age I commenced an Author:—It is a whim, that has served me longest, and best, and will probably be my last."

Lightly as this most modest of Poets has spoken of his own exertions, and late as he appeared to himself in producing his chief poetical works, he had received from nature a contemplative spirit, perpetually acquiring a store of mental treasure, which he at last unveiled, to delight and astonish the world with its unexpected magnificence. Even his juvenile verses discover a mind deeply impressed with sentiments of piety ; and in proof of this assertion, I select a few Stanzas from an Ode, written, when he was very young, on reading Sir Charles Grandison.

*To rescue from the tyrant's sword
The oppress'd ;—unseen, and unimplor'd,
To cheer the face of woe ;
From lawless insult to defend
An orphan's right—a fallen friend,
And a forgiven foe ;*

*These, these, distinguish, from the croud,
And these alone, the great and good,
The guardians of mankind ;
Whose bosoms with these virtues heave,
O, with what matchless speed, they leave !
The multitude behind !*

*Then ask ye from what cause on earth
Virtues like these derive their birth ?
Derived from Heaven alone ;
Full on that favour'd breast they shine,
Where Faith and Resignation join
To call the blessing down.*

Suc

LIFE OF COWPER.

21

*Such is that heart :—But while the Muse
Thy theme, O Richardson, pursues,
Her feebler spirits faint :
She cannot reach, and would not wrong,
That subject for an Angel's song,
The Hero, and the Saint.*

His early turn to moralize, on the slightest occasion, will appear from the following Verses, which he wrote at the age of eighteen ; and in which those, who love to trace the rise and progress of genius, will, I think, be pleased to remark the very promising seeds of those peculiar powers, which unfolded themselves in the richest maturity at a distant period, and rendered that beautiful and sublime Poem, *The Task*, the most instructive and interesting of modern compositions.

VERSES ON FINDING THE HEEL OF A SHOE.

WRITTEN AT BATH, IN 1748.

*Fortune! I thank thee: gentle Goddess! thanks!
Not that my Muse, tho' bashful, shall deny,
She would have thank'd thee rather, hadst thou cast
A treasure in her way; for neither meed
Of early breakfast to dispell the fumes,
And bowel-racking pains of emptiness,
Nor noon-tide feast, nor evening's cool repast
Hopes she from this—presumptuous, tho' perhaps
The Cobler, leather-carving artist! might.*

Nathless

*Nathless she thanks thee, and accepts thy boon,
 Whatever, not as erst the fabled Cock,
 Vain-glorious fool! unknowing what he found,
 Spurn'd the rich gem, thou gav'st him. Wherefore ah!
 Why not on me that favour, (worthier sure!)
 Conferr'dst thou, Goddess! Thou art blind, thou say'st:
 Enough!—Thy blindness shall excuse the deed.*

*Nor does my Muse no benefit exhale
 From this thy scant indulgence!—even here
 Hints, worthy sage philosophy, are found;
 Illustrious hints to moralize my song!
 This pond'rous Heel of perforated hide
 Compact, with pegs indented, many a row,
 Haply, (for such its massy form bespeaks)
 The weighty tread of some rude peasant clown
 Upbore: on this supported oft, he stretch'd,
 With uncouth strides, along the furrow'd glebe,
 Flatt'ning the stubborn clod, 'till cruel time,
 (What will not cruel time?) on a wry step,
 Sever'd the strict cohesion; when, alas!
 He, who could erst, with even, equal pace,
 Pursue his destin'd way with symmetry,
 And some proportion form'd, now, on one side,
 Curtail'd and maim'd, the sport of vagrant boys,
 Cursing his frail supporter, treacherous prop!
 With toilsome steps, and difficult, moves on.
 Thus fares it oft with other, than the feet
 Of humble villager—the statesman thus,*

Up

*Up the steep road, where proud ambition leads,
Aspiring first, uninterrupted winds
His prosp'rous way; nor fears miscarriage foul,
While policy prevails, and friends prove true:
But that support soon failing, by him left,
On whom he most depended, basely left,
Betray'd, deserted, from his airy height
Head-long he falls; and thro' the rest of life,
Drags the dull load of disappointment on.*

Of a youth, who, in a scene like Bath, could produce such a meditation, it might fairly be expected, that he would

*"In riper life, exempt from public haunt,
Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing."*

These few words of Shakespear have often appeared to me as an absolute portrait of Cowper, in those quiet and chearful days, when he exercised, and enjoyed, his rare poetical powers in privacy, at the pleasant village of Weston. But before we contemplate the poetical Recluse in that scene, it is the duty of his Biographer to relate some painful incidents, that led him, by extraordinary steps, to his favourite retreat.

Though extreme diffidence, and a tendency to despond, seemed
early

early to preclude Cowper from the expectation of climbing to the splendid summit of the profession he had chosen ; yet, by the interest of his family, he had prospects of emolument, in a line of public life, that appeared better suited to the modesty of his nature, and to his moderate ambition.

In his thirty-first year, he was nominated to the offices of Reading Clerk, and Clerk of the private Committees in the House of Lords. A situation the more desirable, as such an establishment might enable him to marry early in life ; a measure, to which he was doubly disposed by judgement and inclination. But the peculiarities of his wonderful mind rendered him unable to support the ordinary duties of his new office ; for the idea of reading in public proved a source of torture to his tender, and apprehensive, spirit. An expedient was devised to promote his interest, without wounding his feelings. Resigning his situation of Reading Clerk, he was appointed Clerk of the Journals in the same House of Parliament, with a hope, that his personal appearance, in that assembly, might not be required ; but a parliamentary dispute made it necessary for him to appear at the Bar of the House of Lords, to entitle himself publickly to the office.

Speaking of this important incident in a sketch, which he once formed himself, of passages in his early life, he expresses, what he endured at that time, in these remarkable words : “ They,
“ whose

“ whose spirits are formed like mine, to whom a public exhibition
“ of themselves is mortal poison, may have some idea of the hor-
“ rors of my situation—others can have none.”

His terrors on this occasion arose to such an astonishing height, that they utterly overwhelmed his reason:—for although he had endeavoured to prepare himself for his public duty, by attending closely at the office, for several months, to examine the parliamentary journals, his application was rendered useless by that excess of diffidence, which made him conceive, that, whatever knowledge he might previously acquire, it would all forsake him at the Bar of the House. This distressing apprehension encreased to such a degree, as the time for his appearance approached, that when the day, so anxiously dreaded, arrived, he was unable to make the experiment. The very friends, who called on him for the purpose of attending him to the House of Lords, acquiesced in the cruel necessity of his relinquishing the prospect of a station so severely formidable to a frame of such singular sensibility.

The conflict between the wishes of just affectionate ambition, and the terrors of diffidence, so entirely overwhelmed his health and faculties, that after two learned and benevolent divines (Mr. John Cowper, his brother, and the celebrated Mr. Martin Madan, his first cousin) had vainly endeavoured to establish a lasting tranquility in his mind, by friendly and religious conversation,

it was found necessary to remove him to St. Alban's, where he resided a considerable time, under the care of that eminent physician, Dr. Cotton, a scholar, and a poet, who added to many accomplishments a peculiar sweetness of manners in very advanced life, when I had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with him.

The misfortune of mental derangement is a topic of such awful delicacy, that I consider it as the duty of a Biographer rather to sink, in tender silence, than to proclaim, with circumstantial, and offensive tamerity, the minute particulars of a calamity, to which all human beings are exposed, and perhaps in proportion as they have received from nature those delightful, but dangerous gifts, a heart of exquisite tenderness, and a mind of creative energy.

*This is a sight for pity to peruse,
'Till she resembles, faintly, what she views;
'Till sympathy contracts a kindred pain,
Pierc'd with the woes, that she laments in vain.
This, of all maladies, that man infest,
Claims most compassion and receives the least.*

*But with a soul, that ever felt the sting
Of sorrow, sorrow is a sacred thing.*

'Tis

*'Tis not, as heads that never ache suppose,
 Forg'ry of fancy, and a dream of woes.
 Man is a harp, whose chords elude the sight,
 Each yielding harmony, dispos'd aright;
 The screws revers'd (a task, which if He please
 God, in a moment, executes with ease ;)
 Ten thousand, thousand, strings at once go loose ;
 Lost, 'till He tune them, all their pow'r and use,*

— — — — —
*No wounds like those, a wounded spirit feels ;
 No cure for such, 'till God, who makes them, heals.
 And thou, sad sufferer, under nameless ill,
 That yields not to the touch of human skill,
 Improve the kind occasion, understand,
 A Father's frown, and kiss the chast'ning hand !*

It is in this awful, and instructive light, that Cowper himself teaches us to consider the calamity of which I am now speaking ; and of which he, like his illustrious brother of Parnassus, the younger Tasso, was occasionally a most affecting example. Heaven appears to have given a striking lesson to mankind, to guard both virtue, and genius, against pride of heart, and pride of intellect, by thus suspending the affections, and the talents of two most tender and sublime Poets, who, in the purity of their lives, and in the splendour of their intellectual powers, will be ever deservedly reckoned among the pre-eminent of the earth.

From December 1763, to the following July, the pure mind

of Cowper appears to have laboured under the severest sufferings of morbid depression; but the medical skill of Dr Cotton, and the cheerful, benignant manners of that accomplished physician, gradually succeeded, with the blessing of Heaven, in removing the undescribable load of religious despondency, which had clouded the admirable faculties of this innocent, and upright man. His ideas of religion were changed from the gloom of terror and despair, to the lustre of comfort and delight.

This juster and happier view of Evangelical truth is said to have arisen in his mind while he was reading the third Chapter of Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Devout contemplation became more and more dear to his reviving spirit: resolving to relinquish all thoughts of a labourious profession, and all intercourse with the busy world, he acquiesced in a plan of settling at Huntingdon, by the advice of his brother, who, as a minister of the Gospel, and a fellow of Bennet College, in Cambridge, resided in that University; a situation so near to the place chosen for Cowper's retirement, that it afforded to these affectionate brothers opportunities of easy and frequent intercourse. I regret that all the letters which passed between them have perished, and the more so as they sometimes corresponded in verse. John Cowper was also a Poet. He had engaged to execute a translation of Voltaire's *Henriade*, and in the course of the work requested and obtained the assistance of William, who translated, as he informed me himself, two entire Cantos

Cantos of the Poem. This fraternal production, is said to have appeared in a Magazine of the year 1759. I have discovered a rival, and probably an inferior translation, so published, but the joint work of the poetical Brothers has hitherto eluded all my researches.

In June 1765, the reviving invalide removed to a private lodging in the town of Huntingdon, but Providence soon introduced him into a family, which afforded him one of the most singular, and valuable friends, that ever watched an afflicted mortal in seasons of overwhelming adversity; that friend, to whom the Poet exclaims in the commencement of the Task,

*And witness, dear companion of my walks,
Whose arm, this twentieth winter, I perceive
Fast lock'd in mine, with pleasure such as love,
Confirmed by long experience of thy worth,
And well-tried virtues, could alone inspire;
Witness a joy, that thou hast doubled long!
Thou knowest my praise of nature most sincere;
And that my raptures are not conjured up
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
But genuine, and art partner of them all.*

These verses would be alone sufficient to make every poetical reader take a lively interest in the lady they describe; but these are far from being the only tribute, which the gratitude of Cowper has paid to the endearing virtues of his female companion. More poetical memorials of her merit will be found in these Volumes, and

and in verse so exquisite, that it may be questioned, if the most passionate love ever gave rise to poetry more tender, or more sublime.

Yet, in this place, it appears proper to apprise the reader, that it was not love, in the common acceptation of the word, which inspired these admirable eulogies. The attachment of Cowper to Mrs. Unwin, the Mary of the Poet! was an attachment perhaps unparalleled. Their domestic union, though not sanctioned by the common forms of life, was supported with perfect innocence, and endeared to them both, by their having struggled together through a series of sorrow. A spectator of sensibility, who had contemplated the uncommon tenderness of their attention to the wants and infirmities of each other in the decline of life, might have said of their singular attachment,

*L'Amour n'a rien de si tendre,
Ni L'Amitié de si doux.*

As a connexion so extraordinary forms a striking feature in the history of the Poet, the reader will probably be anxious to investigate its origin and progress.—It arose from the following little incident.

The countenance and deportment of Cowper, though they indicated his native shyness, had yet very singular powers of attraction. On his first appearance in one of the churches at Huntingdon, he

he engaged the notice and respect of an amiable young man, William Cawthorne Unwin, then a student at Cambridge, who having observed, after divine service, that the interesting stranger was taking a solitary turn under a row of trees, was irresistibly led to share his walk, and to solicit his acquaintance.

They were soon pleased with each other, and the intelligent youth, charmed with the acquisition of such a friend, was eager to communicate the treasure to his parents, who had long resided in Huntingdon.

Mr. Unwin, the father, had for some years been master of a free school in the town; but, as he advanced in life, he quitted that labourious situation, and settling in a large convenient house in the High-street, contented himself with a few domestic pupils, whom he instructed in classical literature.

This worthy divine, who was now far advanced in years, had been Lecturer to the two churches at Huntingdon, before he obtained, from his College at Cambridge, the Living of Grimston. While he lived in expectation of this preferment, he had attached himself to a young lady of lively talents, and remarkably fond of reading. This lady who, in the process of time, and by a series of singular events, became the friend and guardian of Cowper, was the daughter of Mr. Cawthorne, a draper in Ely. She was married to Mr. Unwin on his succeeding to the preferment that he expected.

pected from his College, and settled with him on his Living of Grimston, but not liking the situation and society of that sequestered scene, she prevailed on her husband to establish himself in the town of Huntingdon, where he was known and respected.

They had resided there many years, and with their two only children, a son and a daughter (whom I remember to have noticed at Cambridge, in the year 1763, as a youth and a damsel of countenances uncommonly pleasing) they formed a cheerful, and social family, when the younger Unwin, described by Cowper as

*“ A friend,
Whose worth deserves the warmest lay,
That ever friendship penn’d ; ”*

presented to his parents the solitary stranger, on whose retirement he had benevolently intruded, and whose welfare he became more and more anxious to promote. An event highly pleasing and comfortable to Cowper soon followed this introduction ; he was affectionately solicited by all the Unwins to relinquish his lonely lodging, and become a part of their family.

I am now arrived at that period in the personal history of my friend, when I am fortunately enabled to employ his own descriptive powers in recording the events and characters that particularly interested him, and in displaying the state of his mind at a remarkable

markable season of his checkered life. The following are the most early Letters of this affectionate Writer, with which time and chance, with the kindness of his friends and relations, have afforded me the advantage of adorning this Work.

Among his juvenile intimates, and correspondents, he particularly regarded two gentlemen, who devoted themselves to different branches of the Law, the present Lord Thurlow, and Joseph Hill, Esqr. whose name appears in the second Volume of Cowper's Poems, prefixed to a few Verses of exquisite beauty; a brief epistle, that seems to have more of the genuine ease, spirit, and moral gaiety of Horace, than any original epistle in the English language! From these two confidential associates of the Poet, in his unclouded years, I expected materials for the display of his early genius; but in the torrent of busy and splendid life, which bore the first of them to a mighty distance from his less ambitious fellow-student of the Temple, the private letters, and verses, that arose from their youthful intimacy, have perished.

Mr. Hill has kindly favoured me with a very copious collection of Cowper's Letters to himself, through a long period of time, and although many of them are of a nature, not suited to publication, yet many others will illustrate and embellish these Volumes. The steadiness and integrity of Mr. Hill's regard for a person so much sequestered from his sight, gives him a peculiar title to stand first

among those, whom Cowper has honoured by addressing to them his highly interesting and affectionate Letters. Many of these which I shall occasionally introduce in the parts of the narrative to which they belong, may tend to confirm a truth, not unpleasing to the majority of readers, that the temperate zone of moderate fortune, equally removed from high, and low life, is most favourable to the permanence of friendship.

LETTER I.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.—Cook's Court, Carey-Street, London.

Huntingdon, June 24, 1765.

DEAR JOE.

The only recompense I can make you for your kind attention to my affairs, during my illness, is to tell you, that by the mercy of God I am restored to perfect health both of mind and body. This, I believe, will give you pleasure, and I would gladly do any thing from which you could receive it.

I left St. Alban's on the 17th, and arrived that day at Cambridge, spent some time there with my brother, and came hither on the 22d. I have a lodging that puts me continually in mind of our summer excursions; we have had many worse, and except the size of it (which however is sufficient for a single man) but few better.

better. I am not quite alone, having brought a servant with me from St. Alban's, who is the very mirror of fidelity and affection for his master. And whereas the Turkish Spy says, he kept no servant, because he would not have an enemy in his house, I hired mine; because I would have a friend. Men do not usually bestow these encomiums on their lackeys, nor do they usually deserve them, but I have had experience of mine, both in sickness and in health, and never saw his fellow.

The river Ouse, I forget how they spell it, is the most agreeable circumstance in this part of the world; at this town it is I believe as wide as the Thames at Windsor; nor does the silver Thames better deserve that epithet, nor has it more flowers upon its banks, these being attributes which, in strict truth, belong to neither. Fluellin would say, they are as like as my fingers to my fingers, and there is Salmon in both. It is a noble stream to bathe in, and I shall make that use of it three times a week, having introduced myself to it for the first time this morning.

I beg you will remember me to all my friends, which is a task will cost you no great pains to execute—particularly remember me to those of your own house, and believe me

Your very affectionate

WM. COWPER.

LETTER II.

To Major COWPER, at the Park-House, near Hartford.

Huntingdon, Oct. 18, 1765.

MY DEAR MAJOR,

I have neither lost the use of my fingers nor my memory, though my unaccountable silence might incline you to suspect that I had lost both. The history of those things which have, from time to time, prevented my scribbling, would be not only insipid, but extremely voluminous, for which reasons they will not make their appearance at present, nor probably at any time hereafter. If my neglecting to write to you were a proof that I had never thought of you, and that had been really the case, five shillings a piece would have been much too little to give for the sight of such a monster ! but I am no such monster, nor do I perceive in myself the least tendency to such a transformation. You may recollect that I had but very uncomfortable expectations of the accommodation I should meet with at Huntingdon. How much better is it to take our lot, where it shall please Providence to cast it, without anxiety ! Had I chosen for myself, it is impossible I could have fixt upon a place so agreeable to me in all respects. I so much dreaded the thought of having a new acquaintance to make, with no other recommendation than that of being a perfect stranger, that I heartily wished no creature here might take the least notice of me. Instead of which, in about two months after my arrival, I became known to all the visitable people here, and do verily think it the most agreeable neighbourhood I ever saw.

Here

Here are three families who have received me with the utmost civility, and two in particular have treated me with as much cordiality, as if their pedigree and mine had grown upon the same sheep-skin. Besides these, there are three or four single men, who suit my temper to a hair. The town is one of the neatest in England, the country is fine, for several miles about it, and the roads, which are all turnpike, and strike out four or five different ways, are perfectly good all the year round. I mention this latter circumstance chiefly because my distance from Cambridge has made a horseman of me at last, or at least is likely to do so. My brother and I meet every week, by an alternate reciprocation of intercourse, as Sam Johnson would express it; sometimes I get a lift in a neighbour's chaise, but generally ride. As to my own personal condition, I am much happier than the day is long, and sun-shine and candle-light alike see me perfectly contented. I get books in abundance, as much company as I chuse, a deal of *comfortable leisure*, and enjoy better health, I think, than for many years past. What is there wanting to make me happy? Nothing, if I can but be as thankful as I ought, and I trust that He who has bestowed so many blessings upon me, will give me gratitude to crown them all. I beg you will give my love to my dear cousin Maria, and to every body at the Park. If Mrs. Maitland is with you, as I suspect by a passage in Lady Hesketh's letter to me, pray remember me to her very affectionately. And believe me, my dear friend, ever yours.

WM. COWPER.

LETTER

LETTER III.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

October 25, 1765.

DEAR JOE.

I am afraid the month of October has proved rather unfavourable to the belle assemblée at Southampton, high winds and continual rains being bitter enemies to that agreeable lounge, which you and I are equally fond of. I have very cordially betaken myself to my books, and my fire-side, and seldom leave them unless merely for exercise. I have added another family to the number of those I was acquainted with, when you were here. Their name is Unwin—the most agreeable people imaginable; quite sociable, and as free from the ceremonious civility of country gentlefolks as any I ever met with. They treat me more like a near relation than a stranger, and their house is always open to me. The old gentleman carries me to Cambridge in his chaise. He is a man of learning and good sense, and as simple as Parson Adams. His wife has a very uncommon understanding, has read much to excellent purpose, and is more polite than a dutchess. The son, who belongs to Cambridge, is a most amiable young man, and the daughter quite of a piece with the rest of the family. They see but little company, which suits me exactly; go when I will, I find a house full of peace and cordiality in all its parts, and am sure to hear no scandal, but such discourse instead of it, as we are all better for. You remember Rousseau's
description

description of an English morning ; such are the mornings I spend with these good people, and the evenings differ from them in nothing, except that they are still more snug and quieter. Now I know them, I wonder that I liked Huntingdon so well before I knew them, and am apt to think, I should find every place disagreeable, that had not an Unwin belonging to it.

This incident convinces me of the truth of an observation I have often made, that when we circumscribe our estimate of all that is clever within the limits of our own acquaintance (which I at least have been always apt to do) we are guilty of a very uncharitable censure upon the rest of the world, and of a narrowness of thinking disgraceful to ourselves. Wapping and Redriff may contain some of the most amiable persons living, and such as one would go to Wapping and Redriff to make acquaintance with. You remember Mr. Gray's stanza,

*Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The deep unfathom'd caves of ocean bear,
Full many a rose is born to blush unseen,
And waste its fragrance on the desert air.*

Yours, dear Joe,

WM. COWPER.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, near Hartford.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I am much obliged to you for Pearsall's Meditations, especially as it furnishes me with an occasion of writing to you, which is all I have waited for. My friends must excuse me if I write to none but those who lay it fairly in my way to do so. The inference I am apt to draw from their silence is, that they wish me to be silent too.

I have great reason, my dear Cousin, to be thankful to the gracious Providence, that conducted me to this place. The lady, in whose house I live, is so excellent a person, and regards me with a friendship so truly Christian, that I could almost fancy my own Mother restored to life again, to compensate to me for all the friends I have lost, and all my connexions broken. She has a son at Cambridge in all respects worthy of such a mother, the most amiable young man I ever knew. His natural and acquired endowments are very considerable, and as to his virtues, I need only say, that he is a Christian. It ought to be a matter of daily thanksgiving to me, that I am admitted into the society of such persons, and I pray God to make me, and keep me worthy of them.

Your brother Martin has been very kind to me, having wrote to me twice in a stile, which, though it once was irksome to me, to say
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the least I now know how to value. I pray God to forgive me the many light things I have both said and thought of him and his labours. Hereafter I shall consider him as a burning and a shining light, and as one of those who having turned many to righteousness, shall shine hereafter as the stars for ever and ever.

So much for the state of my heart, as to my spirits I am cheerful and happy, and having peace with God, have peace within myself. For the continuance of this blessing I trust to Him who gives it, and they who trust in Him shall never be confounded.

Yours affectionately,

Huntingdon,

W. COWPER.

At the Revd. Mr. Unwin's,

March 11, 1766.

LETTER V.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, near Hartford.

April 4, 1766.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I agree with you that letters are not essential to friendship, but they seem to be a natural fruit of it, when they are the only intercourse that can be had. And a friendship producing no sensible effects is so like indifference, that the appearance may easily deceive even an acute discernor. I retract

however all that I said in my last upon this subject, having reason to suspect that it proceeded from a principle which I would discourage in myself upon all occasions, even a pride that felt itself hurt upon a mere suspicion of neglect. I have so much cause for humility, and so much need of it too, and every little sneaking resentment is such an enemy to it, that I hope I shall never give quarter to any thing that appears in the shape of sullenness or self-consequence hereafter. Alas! if my best Friend, who laid down his life for me, were to remember all the instances, in which I have neglected him, and to plead them against me in judgment, where should I hide my guilty head in the day of recompense? I will pray therefore for blessings upon my friends even though they cease to be so, and upon my enemies though they continue such. The deceitfulness of the natural heart is inconceivable; I know well that I passed upon my friends for a person at least religiously inclined, if not actually religious, and what is more wonderful I thought myself a Christian, when I had no faith in Christ, when I saw no beauty in him, that I should desire him, in short when I had neither faith nor love, nor any Christian grace whatever, but a thousand seeds of rebellion instead, ever more springing up in enmity against him. But blessed be God, even the God who is become my salvation. The hail of affliction, and rebuke for sin has swept away the refuge of lies. It pleased the Almighty in great mercy to set all my misdeeds before me. At length the storm being past, a quiet and peaceful serenity of soul succeeded, such as
ever

ever attends the gift of living faith in the all-sufficient atonement, and the sweet sense of mercy and pardon purchased by the blood of Christ. Thus did he break me, and bind me up, thus did he wound me, and his hands made me whole. My dear Cousin, I make no apology for entertaining you with the history of my conversion, because I know you to be a Christian in the sterling import of the appellation. This is however, but a very summary account of the matter, neither would a letter contain the astonishing particulars of it. If we ever meet again in this world, I will relate them to you by word of mouth, if not they will serve for the subject of a conference in the next, where I doubt not I shall remember and record them with a gratitude better suited to the subject.

Yours my dear Cousin affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

LETTER VI.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

April 17, 1766.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

As in matters unattainable by reason, and unrevealed in the Scripture, it is impossible to argue at all; so in matters concerning which reason can only give a probable guess, and the Scripture has made no explicit discovery, it is, though not impossible to argue at all, yet impossible to argue to any certain

conclusion. This seems to me to be the very case with the point in question—Reason is able to form many plausible conjectures concerning the possibility of our knowing each other in a future state; and the Scripture has, here and there, favoured us with an expression, that looks at least like a slight intimation of it; but because a conjecture can never amount to a proof, and a slight intimation cannot be construed into a positive assertion; therefore I think we can never come to any absolute conclusion upon the subject. We may indeed reason about the plausibility of our conjectures, and we may discuss, with great industry, and shrewdness of argument, those passages in the Scripture, which seem to favour the opinion; but still no certain means having been afforded us, no certain end can be attained; and after all, that can be said, it will still be doubtful, whether we shall know each other or not.

As to arguments founded upon human reason only, it would be easy to muster up a much greater number on the affirmative side of the question, than it would be worth my while to write, or yours to read. Let us see therefore what the Scripture says, or seems to say towards the proof of it; and of this kind of argument also I shall insert but a few of those, which seem to me to be the fairest and clearest for the purpose. For after all, a disputant, on either side of this question, is in danger of that censure of our blessed Lord's, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scripture, nor the power of God."

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As to Parables, I know it has been said in the dispute concerning the intermediate state, that they are not argumentative ; but, this having been controverted by very wise and good men, and the Parable of Dives and Lazarus having been used by such, to prove an intermediate state, I see not why it may not be as fairly used for the proof of any other matter, which it seems fairly to imply. In this Parable we see that Dives is represented as knowing Lazarus, and Abraham as knowing them both, and the discourse between them is intirely concerning their respective characters and circumstances upon earth. Here therefore our Saviour seems to countenance the notion of a mutual knowledge and recollection, and if a soul that has perished shall know the soul that is saved, surely the heirs of salvation shall know and recollect each other. *Jordan*

In the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, the 2d Chapter, and 19th Verse, Saint Paul says, " What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming ? For ye are our glory and our joy."

As to the hope which the Apostle has formed concerning them, he himself refers the accomplishment of it to the coming of Christ, meaning that then he should receive the recompense of his labours in their behalf ; his joy and glory he refers likewise to the same period, both which would result from the sight of such numbers redeemed by the blessing of God upon his ministration, when

he

he should present them before the great Judge, and say in the words of a greater than himself, "Lo! I, and the children whom thou hast given me." This seems to imply that the Apostle should know the Converts, and the Converts the Apostle, at least at the day of Judgment, and if then, why not afterwards?

See also the 4th Chapter of that Epistle, 13, 14, 16, which I have not room to transcribe. Here the Apostle comforts them under their affliction, for their deceased bretheren, exhorting them "Not to sorrow as without hope;" and what is the hope, by which he teaches them to support their spirits? Even this, "That them, which sleep in Jesus, shall God bring with him." In other words, and by a fair paraphrase surely, telling them they are only taken from them for a season, and that they should receive them at the resurrection.

If you can take off the force of these Texts, my dear Cousin, you will go a great way towards shaking my opinion, if not I think they must go a great way towards shaking yours.

The reason, why I did not send you my opinion of Pearshall was, because I had not then read him; I have read him since, and like him much, especially the latter part of him; but you have whetted my curiosity to see the last letter by tearing it out; unless you can give me a good reason why I should not see it, I shall enquire for the book the first time I go to Cambridge. Perhaps I may
be

be partial to Hervey for the sake of his other writings, but I cannot give Pearshall the preference to him, for I think him one of the most scriptural writers in the world.

Yours,

WM. COWPER.

LETTER VII.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

April 18, 1766.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Having gone as far as I thought needful to justify the opinion of our meeting and knowing each other hereafter; I find upon reflection, that I have done but half my business, and that one of the questions, you proposed, remains intirely unconsidered, viz. "Whether the things of our present state will not be of too low and mean a nature to engage our thoughts, or make a part of our communications in Heaven."

The common and ordinary occurrences of life no doubt, and even the ties of kindred, and of all temporal interests, will be entirely discarded from amongst that happy society, and possibly even the remembrance of them done away. But it does not therefore follow, that our spiritual concerns, even in this life, will be forgotten, neither do I think that they can ever appear trifling to us in
any

any the most distant period of Eternity. God, as you say in reference to the Scripture, will be all in all. But does not that expression mean, that being admitted to so near an approach to our Heavenly Father and Redeemer, our whole nature, the soul, and all its faculties, will be employed in praising and adoring him? Doubtless however, this will be the case, and if so, will it not furnish out a glorious theme of thanksgiving, to recollect "The rock whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence we were digged?" To recollect the time when our faith, which under the tuition and nurture of the Holy Spirit, has produced such a plentiful harvest of immortal bliss, was as a grain of Mustard-seed, small in itself, promising but little fruit, and producing less? To recollect the various attempts, that were made upon it, by the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and its various triumphs over all, by the assistance of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ? At present. whatever our convictions may be, of the sinfulness and corruption of our nature, we can make but a very imperfect estimate either of our weakness or our guilt. Then, no doubt, we shall understand the full value of the wonderful salvation wrought out for us: and it seems reasonable to suppose, that in order to form a just idea of our redemption, we shall be able to form a just one of the danger we have escaped; when we know how weak and frail we were, surely we shall be more able to render due praise and honour to His strength who fought for us; when we know completely the hatefulness of sin in the sight of God, and how deeply we were tainted by it, we shall

shall know how to value the blood by which we are cleansed, as we ought. The twenty-four Elders, in the 5th of the Revelations, give glory to God for their redemption, out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation. This surely implies a retrospect to their respective conditions upon earth, and that each remembered out of what particular kindred and nation he had been redeemed, and if so, then surely the minutest circumstance of their redemption did not escape their memory. They who triumph over the Beast, in the 15th Chapter, sing the Song of Moses, the servant of God; and what was that Song? A sublime record of Israel's deliverance, and the destruction of her enemies in the Red-Sea, typical no doubt of the song which the redeemed in Sion shall sing to celebrate their own salvation, and the defeat of their spiritual enemies. This again implies a recollection of the dangers they had before encountered, and the supplies of strength and ardour they had in every emergency received from the great Deliverer out of all. These quotations do not indeed prove that their warfare upon earth includes a part of their converse with each other, but they prove that it is a theme not unworthy to be heard even before the throne of God, and therefore it cannot be unfit for reciprocal communication.

But you doubt whether there is *any* communication between the blessed at all, neither do I recollect any Scripture that proves it, or that bears any relation to the subject. But reason seems to

require it so peremptorily, that a society, without social intercourse seems to be a solecism, and a contradiction in terms, and the inhabitants of those regions are called you know in Scripture, an innumerable *Company*, and an *Assembly*, which seems to convey the idea of society, as clearly as the word itself. Human testimony weighs but little in matters of this sort, but let it have all the weight it can : I know no greater names in Divinity, than Watts, and Doddridge, they were both of this opinion, and I send you the words of the latter :

“ Our *Companions in Glory* may probably assist us by their wise and good observations, when we come to make the *Providence of God*, here upon earth, under the guidance and direction of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *subject of our mutual converse*.”

Thus, my dear Cousin, I have spread out my reasons before you for an opinion which, whether admitted or denied, affects not the state or interest of our soul :—May our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, conduct us into his own Jerusalem, where there shall be no night, neither any darkness at all, where we shall be free even from innocent error, and perfect in the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Yours faithfully,

WM. COWPER.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, near Hartford.

Huntingdon, Sept. 3, 1766.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

It is reckoned, you know, a great achievement to silence an opponent in disputation, and your silence was of so long continuance, that I might well begin to please myself with the apprehension of having accomplished so arduous a matter. To be serious, however, I am not sorry, that what I have said, concerning our knowledge of each other, in a future state, has a little inclined you to the affirmative. For though the redeemed of the Lord shall be sure of being as happy in that state as infinite power, employed by infinite goodness, can make them, and therefore it may seem immaterial whether we shall, or shall not, recollect each other hereafter ; yet our present happiness at least is a little interested in the question. A parent, a friend, a wife, must needs, I think, feel a little heart ache at the thought of an eternal separation from the objects of her regard : and not to know them, when she meets them in another life, or never to meet them at all, amounts, though not altogether, yet nearly to the same thing. Remember them, I think she needs must. To hear that they are happy, will indeed be no small addition to her own felicity ; but to see them so, will surely be a greater. Thus at least it appears to our present human apprehension ; consequently, therefore, to think, that when

we leave them, we lose them for ever, that we must remain eternally ignorant whether they, that were flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, partake with us of celestial glory, or are disinherited of their heavenly portion, must shed a dismal gloom over all our present connexions. For my own part, this life is such a momentary thing, and all its interests have so shrunk in my estimation, since by the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, I became attentive to the things of another; that like a worm in the bud of all my friendships and affections, this very thought would eat out the heart of them all, had I a thousand; and were their date to terminate with this life, I think I should have no inclination to cultivate, and improve such a fugitive business. Yet friendship is necessary to our happiness here, and built upon Christian principles, upon which only it can stand, is a thing even of religious sanction—for what is that love, which the Holy Spirit, speaking by St. John, so much inculcates, but friendship? The only love which deserves the name; a love which can toil, and watch, and deny itself, and go to death for its brother. Worldly friendships are a poor weed compared with this, and even this union of spirit in the bond of peace, would suffer in my mind at least, could I think it were only coeval with our earthly mansions.—It may possibly argue great weakness in me, in this instance, to stand so much in need of future hopes to support me in the discharge of present duty. But so it is—I am far, I know, very far, from being perfect in Christian love, or any other
divine

divine attainment, and am therefore unwilling to forego whatever may help me in my progress.

You are so kind as to enquire after my health, for which reason I must tell you, what otherwise would not be worth mentioning, that I have lately been just enough indisposed to convince me, that not only human life in general, but mine in particular, hangs by a slender thread. I am stout enough in appearance, yet a little illness demolishes me. I have had a severe shake, and the building is not so firm as it was. But I bless God for it with all my heart. If the inner man be but strengthened day by day, as I hope, under the renewing influences of the Holy Ghost, it will be no matter how soon the outward is dissolved. He who has in a manner raised me from the dead, in a literal sense, has given me the grace I trust to be ready at the shortest notice, to surrender up to him that life, which I have twice received from him. Whether I live or die, I desire it may be to His Glory, and it must be to my happiness.—I thank God that I have those amongst my kindred to whom I can write without reserve my sentiments upon this subject, as I do to you. A letter upon any other subject is more insipid to me than ever my task was when a school-boy, and I say not this in vain glory, God forbid! but to shew you what the Almighty, whose name I am unworthy to mention, has done for me, the chief of sinners. Once he was a terror to me, and his service, Oh what a weariness it was! Now I can say I love him, and
his

his holy name, and am never so happy as when I speak of his mercies to me.

Yours, dear Cousin,

WM. COWPER.

LETTER IX.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

Huntingdon, Oct. 20, 1766.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I am very sorry for poor Charles's illness, and hope you will soon have cause to thank God for his complete recovery. We have an epidemical fever in this country likewise, which leaves behind it a continual sighing, almost to suffocation: not that I have seen any instance of it, for blessed be God our family have hitherto escaped it, but such was the account I heard of it this morning.

I am obliged to you for the interest you take in my welfare, and for your enquiring so particularly after the manner in which my time passes here. As to amusements, I mean what the world calls such, we have none: the place indeed swarms with them, and cards and dancing are the professed business of almost all the *gentle* inhabitants of Huntingdon. We refuse to take part in them, or to be accessaries to this way of murdering our time, and by so doing have acquired the name of Methodists. Having told you how we
do

do not spend our time, I will next say how we do. We breakfast commonly between eight and nine; till eleven, we read either the Scripture, or the Sermons of some faithful preacher of those holy mysteries: at eleven we attend Divine Service, which is performed here twice every day, and from twelve to three we separate, and amuse ourselves as we please. During that interval I either read in my own apartment, or walk, or ride, or work in the garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner, but if the weather permits, adjourn to the garden, where with Mrs. Unwin, and her Son, I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation till tea time! If it rains, or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors, or sing some Hymns of Martin's collection, and by the help of Mrs. Unwin's harpsichord make up a tolerable concert, in which our hearts, I hope, are the best and most musical performers. After tea we sally forth to walk in good earnest. Mrs. Unwin is a good walker, and we have generally travelled about four miles before we see home again. When the days are short, we make this excursion in the former part of the day, between church-time and dinner. At night we read and converse as before, till supper, and commonly finish the evening either with hymns, or a sermon; and last of all the family are called to prayers.—I need not tell *you*, that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness, accordingly we are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren. Mrs. Unwin has almost a maternal affection for me, and I have something very like a filial one for her; and her Son and I are
brothers.

brothers. Blessed be the God of our Salvation for such companions, and for such a life, above all for an heart to like it.

I have had many anxious thoughts about taking Orders, and I believe every new convert is apt to think himself called upon for that purpose ; but it has pleased God, by means which there is no need to particularize, to give me full satisfaction as to the propriety of declining it ; indeed they who have the least idea of what I have suffered from the dread of public exhibitions, will readily excuse my never attempting them hereafter. In the mean time, if it please the Almighty, I may be an instrument of turning many to the Truth in a private way, and hope that my endeavours in this way have not been entirely unsuccessful. Had I the zeal of Moses, I should want an Aaron to be my spokes-man.

Yours ever, my dear Cousin,

WM. COWPER.

LETTER X.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

March 11, 1767.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

To find those whom I love, clearly and strongly persuaded of Evangelical Truth, gives me a pleasure superior to any, that this world can afford me. Judge then, whether
your

your Letter, in which the body and substance of a saving faith is so evidently set forth, could meet with a lukewarm reception at my hands, or be entertained with indifference ! Would you know the true reason of my long silence ? Conscious that my religious principles are generally excepted against, and that the conduct they produce wherever they are heartily maintained, is still more the object of disapprobation than those principles themselves, and remembering, that I had made both the one and the other known to you, without having any clear assurance that our faith in Jesus was of the same stamp and character, I could not help thinking it possible that you might disapprove both my sentiments and practice, that you might think the one unsupported by Scripture, and the other whimsical, and unnecessarily strict and rigorous, and consequently would be rather pleased with the suspension of a correspondence, which a different way of thinking upon so momentous a subject as that we wrote upon, was likely to render tedious and irksome to you.

I have told you the truth from my heart ; forgive me these injurious suspicions, and never imagine that I shall hear from you upon this delightful theme without a real joy, or without prayer to God to prosper you in the way of his Truth, his sanctifying and saving Truth. The book you mention lies now upon my table. Marshal is an old acquaintance of mine ; I have both read him and heard him read with pleasure and edification. The doctrines he

maintains are, under the influence of the spirit of Christ, the very life of my soul, and the soul of all my happiness; that Jesus is a *present* Saviour from the guilt of sin, by his most precious blood, and from the power of it by his spirit; that corrupt and wretched in ourselves, in Him, and in *Him only*, we are complete; that being united to Jesus by a lively faith, we have a solid and eternal interest in his obedience and sufferings, to justify us before the face of our heavenly Father, and that all this inestimable treasure, the earnest of which is in Grace, and its consummation in Glory, is given, freely *given* to us of God; in short, that he hath opened the Kingdom of Heaven to *all Believers*. These are the Truths, which, by the Grace of God, shall ever be dearer to me than life itself; shall ever be placed next my heart as the throne whereon the Saviour himself shall sit, to sway all its motions, and reduce that world of iniquity and rebellion, to a state of filial and affectionate obedience to the will of the most Holy:

These, my dear Cousin, are the Truths to which by Nature we are enemies—they debase the Sinner, and exalt the Saviour to a degree which the pride of our hearts (till Almighty grace subdues them) is determined never to allow. May the Almighty reveal his Son in our hearts, continually more and more, and teach us to increase in love towards him continually, for having *given* us the unspeakable riches of Christ. Yours faithfully,

WM. COWPER.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

March 14, 1767.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I just add a line by way of Postscript to my last, to apprise you of the arrival of a very dear friend of mine at the Park on Friday next, the Son of Mr. Unwin, whom I have desired to call on you in his way from London to Huntingdon. If you knew him as well as I do, you would love him as much. But I leave the young man to speak for himself, which he is very able to do. He is ready possessed of an answer to every question you can possibly ask concerning me, and knows my *whole Story*, from first to last. I give you this previous notice, because I know you are not fond of strange faces, and because I thought it would in some degree save him the pain of announcing himself.

I am become a great Florist, and Shrub-doctor. If the Major can make up a small packet of seeds that will make a figure in a garden, where we have little else besides Jessamine and Honey-suckle; such a packet I mean as may be put in one's fob, I will promise to take great care of them, as I ought to value natives of the Park. They must not be such however as to require great skill in the management, for at present I have no skill to spare.

I think Marshal one of the best writers, and the most spiritual expositor of Scripture, I ever read. I admire the strength of his argument, and the clearness of his reasonings upon those parts of our most holy Religion, which are generally least understood (even by real Christians) as master-pieces of the kind. His Section upon the union of the Soul with Christ, is an instance of what I mean, in which he has spoken of a most mysterious truth, with admirable perspicuity, and with great good-sense, making it all the while subservient to his main purport of proving holiness to be the fruit and effect of faith.

I subjoin thus much upon that Author, because though you desired my opinion of him, I remember that in my last, I rather left you to find it out by inference, than expressed it as I ought to have done. I never met with a man who understood the plan of salvation better, or was more happy in explaining it.



LETTER XII.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

Huntingdon, April 3, 1767.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

You sent my friend Unwin home to us, charmed with your kind reception of him, and with every thing he saw at the Park. Shall I once more give you a peep into my vile
and

and deceitful heart? What motive do you think lay at the bottom of my conduct when I desired him to call upon you? I did not suspect at first that pride and vain glory had any share in it, but quickly after I had recommended the visit to him, I discovered in that fruitful soil the very root of the matter. You know I am a stranger here; all such are suspected characters, unless they bring their credentials with them. To this moment, I believe, it is matter of speculation in the place, whence I came, and to whom I belong.

Though my Friend, you may suppose, before I was admitted an inmate here, was satisfied that I was not a mere vagabond, and has since that time received more convincing proofs of my *sponsibility*, yet I could not resist the opportunity of furnishing him with ocular demonstration of it, by introducing him to one of my most splendid connexions; that when he hears me called, *that fellow Cowper*, which has happened heretofore, he may be able, upon unquestionable evidence, to assert my Gentlemanhood, and relieve me from the weight of that opprobrious appellation. Oh Pride, Pride! it deceives with the subtlety of a Serpent, and seems to walk erect, though it crawls upon the earth. How will it twist and twine itself about, to get from under the Cross, which it is the glory of our Christian calling to be able to bear with patience and good will. They who can guess at the heart of a stranger, and you especially, who are of a compassionate temper, will be more ready perhaps to excuse me in this instance, than I can be to excuse

cuse.

cuse myself. But in good truth it was abominable pride of heart, indignation and vanity, and deserves no better name. How should such a creature be admitted into those pure and sinless mansions, where nothing shall enter that defileth, did not the Blood of Christ, applied by the hand of Faith, take away the guilt of sin, and leave no spot or stain behind it? Oh what continual need have I of an Almighty, All-sufficient Saviour! I am glad you are acquainted so *particularly* with *all* the circumstances of my story, for I know that your secrecy and discretion may be trusted with any thing. A thread of mercy ran through all the intricate maze of those afflictive Providences, so mysterious to myself at the time, and which must ever remain so to all, who will not see what was the great design of them; at the judgment seat of Christ the whole shall be laid open. How is the rod of iron changed into a sceptre of love!

I thank you for the seeds; I have committed some of each sort to the ground, whence they will soon spring up like so many mementos to remind me of my friends at the Park.

LETTER XIII.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, July 13, 1767.

The News-paper has told you the truth. Poor Mr. Unwin being flung from his horse, as he was going to his

his church on Sunday Morning, received a dreadful fracture on the back part of the scull, under which he languished till Thursday Evening, and then died. This awful dispensation has left an impression upon our spirits, which will not presently be worn off. He died in a poor cottage, to which he was carried immediately after his fall, about a mile from home, and his body could not be brought to his house, till the spirit was gone to him who gave it. May it be a lesson to us to watch, since we know not the day nor the hour when our Lord cometh.

The effect of it upon my circumstances will only be a change of the place of my abode. For I shall still, by God's leave, continue with Mrs. Unwin, whose behaviour to me has always been that of a mother to a son. We know not yet where we shall settle, but we trust, that the Lord whom we seek, will go before us, and prepare a rest for us. We have employed our friend Haweis, Dr. Conyers of Helmsley, in Yorkshire, and Mr. Newton of Olney, to look out for us, but at present are entirely ignorant under which of the three we shall settle, or whether under either. I have wrote to my Aunt Madan, to desire Martin to assist us with his inquiries. It is probable we shall stay here till Michaelmas.

LETTER XIV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

DEAR JOE:

July 16, 1767.

Your wishes that the Newspaper may have misinformed
you,

you, are vain. Mr. Unwin is dead, and died in the manner there mentioned. At Nine o'clock on Sunday Morning he was in perfect health, and as likely to live twenty years as either of us, and before Ten was stretched speechless and senseless upon a flock bed in a poor cottage, where (it being impossible to remove him) he died on Thursday Evening.—I heard his dying groans, the effect of great agony, for he was a strong man, and much convulsed in his last moments. The few short intervals of sense that were indulged him, he spent in earnest prayer, and in expressions of a firm trust and confidence in the only Saviour. To that strong hold we must all resort at last, if we would have hope in our death ; when every other refuge fails, we are glad to fly to the only shelter, to which we can repair to any purpose ; and happy is it for us when the false ground we have chosen for ourselves being broken under us, we find ourselves obliged to have recourse to the rock which can never be shaken—when this is our lot, we receive great and undeserved mercy.

Our society will not break up, but we shall settle in some other place, where, is at present uncertain.

Yours,

WM. COWPER.

These

These tender and confidential Letters describe, in the clearest light, the singularly peaceful and devout life of this amiable Writer, during his residence at Huntingdon, and the melancholy accident which occasioned his removal to a distant county. Time and chance now introduced to the notice of Cowper, the zealous and venerable friend, who became his intimate associate for many years, after having advised and assisted him in the important concern of fixing his future residence. Mr. Newton, then Curate of Olney, in Buckinghamshire, had been requested by the late Dr. Conyers (who in taking his degree in Divinity at Cambridge, had formed a friendship with young Mr. Unwin, and learned from him the religious character of his Mother) to seize an opportunity, as he was passing through Huntingdon, of making a visit to an exemplary lady. This visit, (so important in its consequences to the destiny of Cowper !) happened to take place within a few days after the calamitous death of Mr. Unwin. As a change of scene appeared desirable, both to Mrs. Unwin and to the interesting Recluse, whom she had generously requested to continue under her care, Mr. Newton offered to assist them in removing to the pleasant and picturesque county in which he resided. They were willing to enter into the flock of a benevolent and animated pastor, whose religious ideas were so much in harmony with their own.—He engaged for them a house at Olney, where they arrived on the 14th of October, 1767.

The time of Cowper, in his new situation, seems to have been chiefly devoted to religious contemplation, to social prayer, and to active charity. To this first of Christian virtues, his heart was eminently inclined, and Providence very graciously enabled him to exercise and enjoy it to an extent far superior to what his own scanty fortune appeared to allow. He was very far from inheriting opulence on the death of his Father in 1756, and the singular cast of his own mind was such, that nature seemed to have rendered it impossible for him either to covet or to acquire riches. His perfect exemption from worldly passions is forcibly displayed in the two following Letters.

LETTER XV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Olney, June 16, 1768.

DEAR JOE.

I thank you for so full an answer to so empty an epistle. If Olney furnished any thing for your amusement you should have it in return, but occurrences here are as scarce as cucumbers at Christmas.

I visited St. Albans about a fortnight since in person, and I visit it every day in thought. The recollection of what passed there, and the consequences that followed it, fill my mind continually, and make the circumstances of a poor transient half spent life, so insipid and unaffecting, that I have no heart to think or write much
about

about them. Whether the nation are worshipping Mr. Wilkes, or any other idol, is of little moment to one who hopes and believes that he shall shortly stand in the presence of the great and blessed God. I thank him that he has given me such a deep impressed persuasion of this awful truth, as a thousand worlds would not purchase from me. It gives a relish to every blessing, and makes every trouble light.

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER XVI.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

DEAR JOE.

1769.

Sir Thomas crosses the Alps, and Sir Cowper, for that is his title at Olney, prefers his home to any other spot of earth in the world. Horace, observing this difference of temper in different persons, cried out a good many years ago, in the true spirit of poetry, "How much one man differs from another!" This does not seem a very sublime exclamation in English, but I remember we were taught to admire it in the original.

My dear Friend I am obliged to you for your invitation: but being long accustomed to retirement, which I was always fond of, I am now more than ever unwilling to revisit those noisy and crowded scenes which I never loved, and which I now abhor. I remember you with all the friendship I ever professed, which is as

K 2

much

much as I ever entertained for any man. But the strange and uncommon incidents of my life, have given an entire new turn to my whole character and conduct, and rendered me incapable of receiving pleasure from the same employments and amusements of which I could readily partake in former days.

I love you, and yours, I thank you for your continued remembrance of me, and shall not cease to be their and your

Affectionate Friend and Servant,

W. COWPER.

His retirement was ennobled by many private acts of beneficence, and his exemplary virtue was such, that the opulent sometimes delighted to make him their almoner. In his sequestered life at Olney, he ministered abundantly to the wants of the poor, from a fund, with which he was supplied by that model of extensive and unostentatious philanthropy, the late John Thornton, Esqr. whose name he has immortalized in his Poem on Charity, still honouring his memory by an additional tribute to his virtues, in the following unpublished Poem, written immediately on his decease, in the year 1790.

*Poets attempt the noblest task they can,
Praising the Author of all Good in Man ;
And next commemorating worthies lost,
The dead, in whom that good abounded most.*

Thee

*Thee therefore of commercial fame, but more
 Fam'd for thy probity, from shore to shore,
 Thee, Thornton, worthy in some page to shine,
 As honest, and more eloquent than mine,
 I mourn; or since thrice happy thou must be,
 The world, no longer thy abode, not thee;
 Thee to deplore, were grief mis-spent indeed;
 It were to weep, that goodness has its meed,
 That there is bliss prepared in yonder sky,
 And glory for the virtuous—when they die.*

*What pleasure can the miser's fondled hoard,
 Or spendthrift's prodigal excess afford,
 Sweet, as the privilege of healing woe,
 Suffer'd by virtue, combating below?
 That privilege was thine; Heaven gave thee means
 To illumine with delight the saddest scenes,
 Till thy appearance chas'd the gloom, forlorn
 As mid-night, and despairing of a morn.
 Thou had'st an industry in doing good,
 Restless as his, who toils and sweats for food,
 A'rice in thee was the desire of wealth
 By rust unperishable, or by stealth.
 And if the genuine worth of gold depend
 On application to its noblest end.
 Thine had a value in the scales of Heaven,
 Surpassing all, that mine or mint have given;
 And tho' God made thee of a nature prone
 To distribution boundless, of thy own,*

And

*And still, by motives of religious force,
 Impell'd thee more to that heroic course ;
 Yet was thy liberality discreet,
 Nice in its choice, and of a temp'rate heat ;
 And though in act unwearied, secret still,
 As, in some solitude, the summer rill
 Refreshes, where it winds, the faded green,
 And cheers the drooping flowers—unheard, unseen !*

*Such was thy Charity ; no sudden start,
 After long sleep of passion in the heart,
 But steadfast principle, and in its kind
 Of close alliance with th' eternal mind ;
 Trac'd easily to its true source above,
 To Him, whose works bespeak his nature, love !
 Thy bounties all were Christian, and I make
 This record of thee for the Gospel's sake ;
 That the incredulous themselves may see
 Its use and power, exemplified in Thee.*

This simple and sublime eulogy was perfectly merited, and among the happiest actions of this truly liberal man, we may reckon his furnishing to a character so reserved, and so retired as Cowper, the means of his enjoying the gratification of active and costly beneficence : a gratification, in which the sequestered Poet had nobly indulged himself, before his acquaintance with Mr. Newton afforded him an opportunity of being concerned in distributing

buting the private, yet extensive bounty of an opulent, and exemplary merchant.

Cowper, before he quitted St. Albans, assumed the charge of a necessitous child, to extricate him from the perils of being educated by very profligate parents; he put him to school at Huntingdon, removed him on his own removal to Olney, and finally settled him as an apprentice in St. Albans.

The warm, benevolent, and chearful enthusiasm of Mr. Newton induced his friend Cowper to participate so abundantly in his devout occupation, that the Poet's time and thoughts were more and more engrossed by religious pursuits. He wrote many Hymns, and occasionally directed the prayers of the poor. Where the nerves are tender, and the imagination tremblingly alive, any little excess, in the exercise of the purest piety, may be attended with such perils to corporeal, and mental health, as men, of a more firm and hardy fibre, would be far from apprehending. Perhaps the life, that Cowper led, on his settling in Olney, had a tendency to encrease the morbid propensity of his frame, though it was a life of admirable sanctity.

Absorbed as he was in devotion, he forgot not his distant friends, and particularly his amiable Relation and Correspondent of the Park-House, near Hartford. The following Letter to that lady has no date, but it was probably written soon after his establishment.

blishment at Olney: The remarkable memento in the Postscript was undoubtedly introduced to counteract an idle rumour, arising from the circumstance of his having settled himself under the roof of a female friend, whose age, and whose virtues, he considered as sufficient securities to ensure her reputation.

LETTER XVII.

To Mrs. COWPER:

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I have not been behind hand in reproaching myself with neglect, but desire to take shame to myself for my unprofitableness in this, as well as in all other respects. I take the next immediate opportunity however of thanking you for yours, and of assuring you that instead of being surprized at your silence, I rather wonder that you, or any of my friends, have any room left for so careless and negligent a correspondent in your memories. I am obliged to you for the intelligence you send me of my kindred, and rejoice to hear of their welfare. He who settles the bounds of our habitations, has at length cast our lot at a great distance from each other, but I do not therefore forget their former kindness to me, or cease to be interested in their well being. You live in the centre of a world I know you do not delight in. Happy are you my dear friend, in being able to discern the insufficiency of all it can afford, to fill and satisfy the desires of an immortal soul. That God who created us for the enjoyment of himself, has determined in mercy that it shall fail us here, in order that the blessed
result

result of all our enquiries after happiness in the creature, may be a warm pursuit, and a close attachment to our true interest, in fellowship and communion with Him, through the name and mediation of a dear Redeemer. I bless his goodness and grace that I have any reason to hope I am a partaker with you in the desire after better things, than are to be found in a world polluted with sin, and therefore devoted to destruction. May he enable us both to consider our present life in its only true light, as an opportunity put into our hands to glorify him amongst men, by a conduct suited to his word and will. I am miserably defective in this holy and blessed art, but I hope there is at the bottom of all my sinful infirmities, a sincere desire to live just so long as I may be enabled, in some poor measure, to answer the end of my existence in this respect, and then to obey the summons, and attend him in a world, where they who are his servants here, shall pay him an un sinful obedience for ever. Your dear Mother is too good to me, and puts a more charitable construction upon my silence than the fact will warrant. I am not better employed than I should be in corresponding with her. I have that within which hinders me wretchedly in every thing that I ought to do, but is prone to trifle, and let time, and every good thing run to waste. I hope however to write to her soon.

My love and best wishes attend Mr. Cowper, and all that enquire after me. May God be with you to bless you, and do you

good by all his dispensations ; don't forget me when you are speaking to our best Friend before his Mercy-seat.

Yours ever,

N. B. I am not married.

WM. COWPER.

In the year 1769, the Lady to whom the preceeding Letters are addressed, was involved in domestic affliction, and the following, which the Poet wrote to her on the occasion, is so full of genuine piety, and true pathos, that it would be an injury to his memory to suppress it.

LETTER XVIII.

To Mrs. COWPER.

Olney, Aug. 31, 1769.

DEAR COUSIN,

A Letter from your brother Frederic brought me yesterday the most afflicting intelligence that has reached me these many years. I pray to God to comfort you, and to enable you to sustain this heavy stroke with that resignation to his will, which none but Himself can give, and which he gives to none but his own children. How blessed and happy is your lot, my dear Friend, beyond the common lot of the greater part of mankind ; that you know what it is to draw near to God in prayer, and are acquainted with a Throne of Grace ! You have resources in the infinite love of a dear Redeemer, which are withheld from millions : and the promise of God, which are yea and amen in Jesus, are sufficient to answer all your necessities, and to sweeten the bitterest cup which your
heavenly

heavenly Father will ever put into your hand. May He now give you liberty to drink at these wells of salvation, till you are filled with consolation and peace in the midst of trouble. He has said, when thou passest through the fire I will be with thee, and when through the floods, they shall not overflow thee. You have need of such a word as this, and he knows your need of it, and the time of necessity is the time when he will be sure to appear in behalf of those who trust him. I bear you and yours upon my heart before him night and day, for I never expect to hear of a distress which shall call upon me with a louder voice to pray for the sufferer. I know the Lord hears me for myself, vile and sinful as I am, and believe, and am sure, that he will hear me for you also. He is the friend of the widow, and the father of the fatherless, even God in his holy habitation; in all our afflictions he is afflicted, and chastens us in mercy. Surely he will sanctify this dispensation to you, do you great and everlasting good by it, make the world appear like dust and vanity in your sight, as it truly is, and open to your view the glories of a better country, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor pain, but God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes for ever. Oh that comfortable word! "I have chosen thee in the furnaces of affliction," so that our very sorrows are evidences of our calling, and he chastens us because we are his children.

My dear Cousin, I commit you to the word of his Grace, and

to the comforts of his Holy Spirit. Your life is needful for your family, may God in mercy to them prolong it, and may he preserve you from the dangerous effects which a stroke like this, might have upon a frame so tender as yours.—I grieve with you, I pray for you, could I do more, I would, but God must comfort you.

Yours, in our dear Lord Jesus,

W. COWPER.

In the following year the tender feelings of Cowper were called forth by family affliction, that pressed more immediately on himself; he was hurried to Cambridge by the dangerous illness of his brother, then residing as a Fellow in Bennet College—an affection truly fraternal had ever subsisted between the brothers, and the reader will recollect what the Poet has said, in one of his Letters, concerning their social intercourse while he resided at Huntingdon.

In the two first years of his residence at Olney, he had been repeatedly visited by Mr. John Cowper, and how cordially he returned his kindness, and his attention, the following Letter will testify, which was probably written in the chamber of the invalid, whom the writer so fervently wishes to restore.

LETTER XIX.

To Mrs. COWPER.

March 5, 1770.

My brother continues much as he was. His case is a very dangerous one. An imposthume of the liver, attended
by

by an asthma and dropsy. The physician has little hope of his recovery, I believe I might say, none at all, only being a friend, he does not formally give him over by ceasing to visit him, lest it should sink his spirits. For my own part I have no expectation of his recovery, except by a signal interposition of Providence in answer to prayer. His case is clearly out of the reach of medicine; but I have seen many a sickness healed, where the danger has been equally threatening, by the only physician of value. I doubt not he will have an interest in your prayers, as he has in the prayers of many. May the Lord incline his ear, and give an answer of peace. —I know it is good to be afflicted. I trust that you have found it so, and that under the teaching of God's own Spirit, we shall both be purified.——It is the desire of my soul to seek a better country, where God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of his people; and where, looking back upon the ways by which he has led us, we shall be filled with everlasting wonder, love and praise.

I must add no more,

Yours ever,

W. COWPER.

The sickness and death of his learned, pious, and affectionate brother, made a very strong impression on the tender heart and mind of Cowper—an impression so strong that it induced him to write a narrative of the remarkable circumstances which occurred at the time. He sent a copy of this narrative to Mr. Newton. The paper is curious in every point of view, and so likely to awaken

awaken sentiments of piety in minds where it may be most desirable to have them awakened, that Mr. Newton has thought it his duty to print it.

Here it is incumbent on me to introduce a brief account of the interesting person, whom the Poet regarded so tenderly. John Cowper was born in 1737, being designed for the church, he was privately educated by a clergyman, and became eminent for the extent and variety of his erudition in the University of Cambridge. His conduct and sentiments as a minister of the gospel are copiously displayed by his brother, in recording the remarkable close of his life. Bennet College, of which he was a Fellow, was his usual residence, and it became the scene of his death on the 20th of March, 1770. Fraternal affection has executed a perfectly just and graceful description of his character, both in prose and verse. I transcribe both, as highly honourable to these exemplary brethren, who may indeed be said to have dwelt together in unity.

“ He was a man ” (says the Poet in speaking of his deceased brother) “ of a most candid and ingenuous spirit ; his temper remarkably sweet, and in his behaviour to me he had always manifested an uncommon affection. His outward conduct so far as it fell under my notice, or I could learn it by the report of others, was perfectly decent and unblameable. There was nothing vicious in any part of his practice, but being of a studious, thoughtful turn, he placed his chief delight in the acquisition of learning,
“ and

“ and made such acquisitions in it, that he had but few rivals in that
 “ of a classical kind. He was critically skilled in the Latin, Greek,
 “ and Hebrew languages ; was beginning to make himself master of
 “ the Syriac, and perfectly understood the French and Italian, the
 “ latter of which he could speak fluently. Learned however as he
 “ was, he was easy and cheerful in his conversation, and entirely
 “ free from the stiffness which is generally contracted by men de-
 “ voted to such pursuits.”

I had a Brother once :

*Peace to the memory of a Man of Worth !
 A man of letters, and of manners too !
 Of manners, sweet as virtue always wears,
 When gay good humour dresses her in smiles !
 He grac'd a College, in which order yet
 Was sacred, and was honour'd, lov'd, and wept
 By more than one, themselves conspicuous there.*

Another interesting tribute to his memory will be found in the following Letter.

LETTER XX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

May 8, 1770.

DEAR JOE,

Your Letter did not reach me till the last post, when I had not time to answer it. I left Cambridge immediately after my brother's death.

I am

I am obliged to you for the particular account you have sent
me * * * * *

He to whom I have surrendered myself, and all my concerns, has otherwise appointed, and let his will be done. He gives me much, which he withholds from others, and if he was pleased to withhold all that makes an outward difference between me and the poor mendicant in the street, it would still become me to say, His will be done.

It pleased God to cut short my brother's connections and expectations here, yet not without giving him lively and glorious views of a better happiness than any he could propose to himself in such a world as this. Notwithstanding his great learning (for he was one of the chief men in the University in that respect) he was candid and sincere in his enquiries after truth. Though he could not come into my sentiments when I first acquainted him with them, nor in the many conversations which I afterward had with him upon the subject, could he be brought to acquiesce in them as scriptural and true, yet I had no sooner left St. Albans than he began to study with the deepest attention those points in which we differed, and to furnish himself with the best writers upon them. His mind was kept open to conviction for five years, during all which time he laboured in this pursuit with unwearied diligence, as leisure and opportunity were afforded. Amongst his dying words were these,
" Brother, I thought you wrong, yet wanted to believe as you did.

" I found

"I found myself not able to believe, yet always thought I should one day be brought to do so." From the study of books, he was brought upon his death-bed, to the study of himself, and there learnt to renounce his righteousness, and his own most amiable character, and to submit himself to the righteousness which is of God by faith. With these views he was desirous of death. Satisfied of his interest in the blessing purchased by the blood of Christ, he prayed for death with earnestness, felt the approaches of it with joy, and died in peace.

Yours, my dear Friend,

W. COWPER.

The exquisite sensibility of Cowper could not fail to suffer deeply on the loss of such a brother ; but it is the peculiar blessing of a religious turn of mind, that it serves as an antidote against the corrosive influence of sorrow. Devotion, if it had no other beneficial effect on the human character, would be still inestimable to man, as a medicine for the anguish he feels, in losing the objects of his affection. How far it proved so in the present case, the reader will be enabled to judge by a letter, in which Cowper describes his sensations on this awful event, to one of his favourite correspondents.

LETTER XXI.

To Mrs. COWPER, Holles-Street, Cavendish-Square.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Olney, June 7, 1770.

I am obliged to you for sometimes thinking of an unseen friend, and bestowing a letter upon me. It gives me pleasure to hear from you, especially to find that our gracious Lord enables you to weather out the storms you meet with, and to cast anchor within the veil.

You judge rightly of the manner in which I have been affected by the Lord's late dispensation towards my brother. I found in it cause of sorrow, that I lost so near a relation, and one so deservedly dear to me, and that he left me just when our sentiments upon the most interesting subject became the same : But much more cause of joy, that it pleased God to give me clear and evident proof, that he had changed his heart, and adopted him into the number of his children. For this I hold myself peculiarly bound to thank him, because he might have done all, that he was pleased to do for him, and yet have afforded him neither strength nor opportunity to declare it. I doubt not that he enlightens the understandings, and works a gracious change in the hearts of many in their last moments, whose surrounding friends are not made acquainted with it.

He told me that from the time he was first ordained, he began to be dissatisfied with his religious opinions, and to suspect that
there

there were greater things concealed in the Bible, than were generally believed, or allowed to be there. From the time when I first visited him, after my release from St. Alban's, he began to read upon the subject. It was at that time I informed him of the views of divine truth, which I had received in that school of affliction. He laid what I said to heart, and began to furnish himself with the best writers upon the controverted points, whose works he read with great diligence and attention, comparing them all the while with the Scripture. None ever truly and ingenuously sought the truth, but they found it. A spirit of earnest inquiry is the gift of God, who never says to any, seek ye my face in vain. Accordingly about ten days before his death, it pleased the Lord to dispell all his doubts, to reveal in his heart the knowledge of the Saviour, and to give him firm and unshaken peace in the belief of his ability and willingness to save. As to the affair of the Fortune-teller he never mentioned it to me, nor was there any such paper found as you mention. I looked over all his papers before I left the place, and had there been such a one, must have discovered it. I have heard the report from other quarters, but no other particulars than that the woman foretold him when he should die. I suppose there may be some truth in the matter, but whatever he might think of it before his knowledge of the truth, and however extraordinary her predictions might really be, I am satisfied that he had then received far other views of the wisdom and majesty of God, than to suppose that he would entrust his secret counsels to a vagrant, who did not

mean I suppose, to be understood to have received her intelligence from the Fountain of Light, but thought herself sufficiently honored by any, who would give her credit for a secret intercourse of this kind with the Prince of Darkness.

Mrs. Unwin is much obliged to you for your kind enquiry after her. She is well, I thank God, as usual, and sends her respects to you. Her Son is in the Ministry, and has the Living of Stock, in Essex. We were last week alarmed with an account of his being dangerously ill; Mrs. Unwin went to see him, and in a few days left him out of danger.



The letters of the afflicted Poet to this amiable and sympathetic relation, have already afforded to my reader an insight into the pure recesses of Cowper's wonderful mind, at some remarkable periods of his life, and if my reader's opinion of these letters is consonant to my own, he will feel concerned, as I do, to find a chasm of ten years in this valuable correspondence; the more so as it was chiefly occasioned by a new, a long, and severe visitation of that mental malady, which periodically involved in calamitous oppression, the superior faculties of this interesting sufferer. His extreme depression seems not to have recurred immediately on the shock of his brother's death. In the autumn of the year in which he sustained that affecting loss, he wrote the following serious, but animated letter to Mr. Hill.

LETTER

LETTER XXII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Sept. 25, 1770.

DEAR JOE.

I have not done conversing with terrestrial objects, though I should be happy were I able to hold more continual converse with a Friend above the skies. He has my heart, but he allows a corner in it for all who shew me kindness, and therefore one for you. The storm of 63 made a wreck of the friendships I had contracted in the course of many years, yours excepted, which has survived the tempest.

I thank you for your repeated invitation. Singular thanks are due to you for so *singular* an instance of your regard. I could not leave Olney, unless in a case of absolute necessity, without much inconvenience to myself and others.



In his sequestered life he seems to have been much consoled and entertained by the society of his pious friend Mr. Newton, in whose religious pursuits he appears to have taken an active part by the composition of sixty-eight Hymns. Mr. Newton wished and expected him to have contributed a much larger number, as he has declared in the Preface to that collection of Hymns, which contains these devotional effusions of Cowper, distinguished by the
initial

initial letter of his name. The volume composed for the inhabitants of Olney was the joint production of the Divine and the Poet. and intended, as the former expressly says in his Preface, “as a
 “monument to perpetuate the remembrance of an intimate and en-
 “deared friendship—With this pleasing view (continues Mr.
 “Newton) I entered upon my part, which would have been smaller
 “than it is, and the book would have appeared much sooner, and
 “in a very different form, if the wise, though mysterious Provi-
 “dence of God had not seen fit to cross my wishes. We had not
 “proceeded far upon our proposed plan, before my dear friend
 “was prevented by a long and affecting indisposition, from afford-
 “ing me any farther assistance.”—The severe illness of the Poet, to
 which these expressions relate, began in 1773, and extended beyond
 the date of the Preface (from which they are quoted) February
 15, 1779.

These social labours of the Poet with an exemplary Man of God, for the purpose of promoting simple piety, among the lower classes of the people, must have been delightful in a high degree to the benevolent heart of Cowper, and I am persuaded he alludes to his own feelings on this subject, in the following passage from his Poem on Conversation.

*True Bliss, if Man may reach it, is compos'd
 Of hearts in union mutually disclos'd ;
 And, farewell else all hope of pure delight !
 Those hearts should be reclaim'd, renew'd, upright :*

Bad

*Bad Men, profaning Friendship's hallow'd name,
Form, in its stead, a covenant of shame :*

* * * * * *
* * * * * *

*But souls, that carry on a blest exchange
Of joys, they meet within their heavenly range,
And with a fearless confidence make known
The sorrows, sympathy esteems its own ;
Daily derive encreasing light and force
From such communion, in their pleasant course,
Feel less the journey's roughness, and its length ;
Meet their opposers with united strength,
And one in heart, in interest, and design,
Gird up each other to the race divine.*

Such fellowship in literary labour, for the noblest of purposes, must be delightful indeed, if attended with success, and at all events, it is entitled to respect ; yet it may be doubtful if the intense zeal, with which Cowper embarked in this fascinating pursuit, had not a dangerous tendency to undermine his very delicate health.

Such an apprehension naturally arises from a recollection of what medical writers of great ability have said on the awful subject of mental derangement. Whenever the slightest tendency to that misfortune appears, it seems expedient to guard a tender spirit from the attractions of Pity herself—So fearfully and wonderfully are we made, that man in all conditions ought perhaps to pray that he

he never may be led to think of his Creator and of his Redeemer, either too little or too much ; since human misery is often seen to arise equally from an utter neglect of all spiritual concerns, and from a wild extravagance of devotion.

But if the charitable and religious zeal of the Poet led him into any excesses of devotion, injurious to the extreme delicacy of his nervous system, he is only the more entitled to admiration and to pity. Indeed his genius, his virtues, and his misfortunes were calculated to excite those tender and temperate passions in their purest state, and to the highest degree. It may be questioned if any mortal could be more sincerely beloved and revered than Cowper was by those, who were best acquainted with his private hours.

The season was now arrived when the firm friendship of Mrs. Unwin was put to the severest of trials, and when her conduct was such as to deserve those rare rewards of grateful attention and tenderness, which, when she herself became the victim of age and infirmity, she received from that exemplary being, who considered himself indebted to her friendly vigilance for his life, and who never forgot an obligation, when his mind was itself.

In 1773, he sunk into such severe paroxysms of religious despondency, that he required an attendant of the most gentle, vigilant, and inflexible spirit. Such an attendant he found in that faithful guardian, whom he had professed to love as a mother, and
who

who watched over him, during this long fit of depressive malady, extended through several years, with that perfect mixture of tenderness and fortitude, which constitutes the inestimable influence of maternal protection. I wish to pass rapidly over this calamitous period, and shall only observe, that nothing could surpass the sufferings of the patient, or the care of the nurse. That meritorious care received from Heaven the most delightful of rewards, in seeing the pure and powerful mind, to whose restoration it had contributed so much, not only gradually restored to the common enjoyments of life, but successively endowed with new and marvellous funds of diversified talents, and courageous application.

The spirit of Cowper emerged by slow degrees from its very deep dejection; and before his mind was sufficiently recovered to employ itself on literary composition, it sought, and found, much salutary amusement in educating a little group of tame Hares, On his expressing a wish to divert himself by rearing a single Leveret, the good-nature of his neighbours supplied him with three. The variety of their dispositions became a source of great entertainment to his compassionate and contemplative spirit. One of the trio, he has celebrated in the Task, and a very animated minute account of this singular family humanized, and described most admirably by himself, in prose, appeared first in the Gentleman's Magazine, and has been recently inserted in the second volume of his Poems. These interesting animals had not only the honour of being

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cherished and celebrated by a Poet, but the pencil has also contributed to their renown ; and their portraits, engraved from a drawing presented to Cowper by a friend unknown, may serve as a little embellishment to this Life of their singularly tender and benevolent protector.

His three tame Hares, Mrs. Unwin, and Mr. Newton, were, for a considerable time, the only companions of Cowper ; but as Mr. Newton was removed to a distance from his afflicted friend, by preferment in London, to which he was presented by that liberal encourager of active piety Mr. Thornton, the friendly Divine before he left Olney in 1780, humanely triumphed over the strong reluctance of Cowper to see a stranger, and kindly introduced him to the regard and good offices of the Revd. Mr. Bull, of Newport-Pagnell, who, from that time, considering it as a duty to visit the Invalide, once a fortnight, acquired, by degrees, his cordial and confidential esteem.

The affectionate temper of Cowper inclined him particularly to exert his talents at the request of his friends ; even in seasons, when such exertion could hardly have been made without a painful degree of self-command.

At the suggestion of Mr. Newton we have seen him writing a series of Hymns : at the request of Mr. Bull he translated several spiritual Songs from the mystical Poetry of Madame de la Mothe Guyon,

Guyon, the tender and fanciful Enthusiast of France, whose talents and misfortunes drew upon her a long series of persecution from many acrimonious bigots, and secured to her the friendship of the mild and indulgent Fenelon !

We shall perceive, as we advance, that the greater Works of Cowper were also written at the express desire of persons whom he particularly regarded ; and it may be remarked, to the honour of Friendship, that he considered its influence as the happiest inspiration ; or to use his own expressive words,

*The Poet's lyre, to fix his fame,
Should be the Poet's heart ;
Affection lights a brighter flame,
Than ever blaz'd by art.*

The Poetry of Cowper is itself an admirable illustration of this maxim ; and perhaps the maxim may point to the prime source of that uncommon force, and felicity, with which this most feeling Poet commands the affection of his Reader.

In delineating the life of an author, it seems the duty of Biography to indicate the degree of influence which the warmth of his heart produced on the fertility of his mind. But those mingled flames of Friendship and Poetry, which were to burst forth with the most powerful effect in the compositions of Cowper, were not yet kindled. His depressive malady had suspended the exercise

of his genius for several years, and precluded him from renewing his correspondence with the relation, whom he so cordially regarded, in Hartfordshire, except by brief letters on pecuniary concerns, in 1779. But in the spring of the following year, a Letter to Mr. Hill abundantly proves that he had regained the free exercise of his talents, both serious and sportive.

LETTER XXIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Olney, May 6, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am much obliged to you for your speedy answer to my queries. I know less of the Law than a country Attorney, yet sometimes I think I have almost as much business. My former connexion with the profession has got wind, and though I earnestly profess, and protest, and proclaim it abroad that I know nothing of the matter, they cannot be persuaded to believe that a head once endued with a legal perriwig, can ever be deficient in those natural endowments it is supposed to cover. I have had the good fortune to be once or twice in the right, which added to the cheapness of a gratuitous counsel, has advanced my credit to a degree I never expected to attain in the capacity of a Lawyer. Indeed if two of the wisest in the science of jurisprudence may give opposite opinions upon the same point, which does not unfrequently happen, it seems to be a matter of indifference whether a man answers by rule or at a venture. He that stumbles upon the
right

right side of the question, is just as useful to his client as he that arrives at the same end by regular approaches, and is conducted to the mark he aims at by the greatest authorities.

* * * * *

These violent attacks of a distemper so often fatal, are very alarming to all who esteem and respect the Chancellor as he deserves. A life of confinement, and of anxious attention to important objects, where the habit is bilious to such a terrible degree, threatens to be but a short one; and I wish he may not be made a text for men of reflection to moralize upon, affording a conspicuous instance of the transient and fading nature of all human accomplishments and attainments.

Yours affectionately,

W. COWPER.



At this time his attention was irresistibly recalled to his cousin, Mrs. Cowper, by hearing that she was deeply afflicted; and he wrote to her the following Letter on the loss of her brother, Frederick Madan, a soldier, who died in America, after having distinguished himself by poetical talents, as well as by military virtues.

LETTER XXIV.

To Mrs. COWPER.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

May 10, 1780.

I do not write to comfort you; that office is not likely to be well performed by one, who has no comfort.

fort for himself; nor to comply with an impertinent ceremony, which in general, might well be spared upon such occasions: but because I would not seem indifferent to the concerns of those I have so much reason to esteem and love. If I did not sorrow for your brother's death, I should expect that nobody would for mine; When I knew him he was much beloved, and I doubt not continued to be so. To live and die together is the lot of a few happy families, who hardly know what a separation means, and one sepulchre serves them all; but the ashes of our kindred are dispersed indeed. Whether the American Gulph has swallowed up any other of my relations I know not; it has made many mourners.

Believe me, my dear Cousin, though after a long silence, which perhaps nothing less than the present concern could have prevailed with me to interrupt, as much as ever,

Your affectionate Kinsman,

W. C.

The next Letter to Mr. Hill affords a striking proof of Cowper's compassionate feelings towards the poor around him.

LETTER XXV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

MON AMI,

July 8, 1780.

If you ever take the tip of the Chancellor's ear between your finger and thumb, you can hardly improve the opportunity

opportunity to better purpose, than if you should whisper into it the voice of compassion and lenity to the Lace-makers. I am an eye witness to their poverty, and do know, that hundreds in this little town, are upon the point of starving, and that the most unremitting industry is but barely sufficient to keep them from it. I know that the Bill by which they would have been so fatally affected is thrown out, but Lord Stormont threatens them with another; and if another like it should pass, they are undone. We lately sent a Petition from hence to Lord Dartmouth; I signed it, and am sure the contents are true. The purport of it was to inform him, that there are very near 1200 Lace-makers in this beggarly town, the most of whom had reason enough, while the Bill was in agitation, to look upon every loaf they bought, as the last they should ever be able to earn. I can never think it good policy to incur the certain inconvenience of ruining 30,000, in order to prevent a remote and possible damage though to a much greater number. The measure is like a scythe, and the poor Lace-makers are the sickly crop that trembles before the edge of it. The prospect of peace with America, is like the streak of dawn in their horizon, but this Bill is like a black cloud behind it, that threatens their hope of a comfortable day with utter extinction.

I did not perceive 'till this moment that I had tacked two similes together, a practice, which though warranted by the example of
of

of Homer, and allowable in an Epic Poem, is rather luxuriant and licentious in a letter ; lest I should add another, I conclude.

His affectionate effort in renewing his correspondence with Mrs. Cowper, to whom he had been accustomed to pour forth his heart without reserve, appears to have had a beneficial effect on his reviving spirits. This pathetic Letter was followed, in the course of two months, by a Letter of a more lively cast, in which the reader will find some touches of his native humour, and a vein of pleasantry peculiar to himself.

LETTER XXVI.

To Mrs. COWPER, Park-Street, Grosvenor-Square.

July 20, 1780.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Mr. Newton having desired me to be of the party, I am come to meet him. You see me sixteen years older, at the least, than when I saw you last ; but the effects of time seem to have taken place rather on the outside of my head, than within it. What was brown is become grey, but what was foolish remains foolish still. Green fruit must rot before it ripens, if the season is such as to afford it nothing but cold winds and dark clouds, that interrupt every ray of sunshine. My days steal away silently, and march on (as poor mad King Lear would have made his

his soldiers march,) as if they were shod with felt; not so silently but that I hear them, yet were it not that I am always listening to their flight, having no infirmity that I had not when I was much younger, I should deceive myself with an imagination that I am still young.

I am fond of writing, as an amusement, but I do not always find it one. Being rather scantily furnished with subjects, that are good for any thing, and corresponding only with those, who have no relish for such as are good for nothing; I often find myself reduced to the necessity, the disagreeable necessity, of writing about myself. This does not mend the matter much, for though in a description of my own condition, I discover abundant materials to employ my pen upon, yet as the task is not very agreeable to *me*, so I am sufficiently aware, that it is likely to prove irksome to others. A painter who should confine himself in the exercise of his art to the drawing of his own picture, must be a wonderful coxcomb if he did not soon grow sick of his occupation, and be peculiarly fortunate, if he did not make others as sick as himself.

Remote as your dwelling is from the late scene of riot and confusion, I hope that though you could not but hear the report, you heard no more, and that the roarings of the mad multitude did not reach you. That was a day of terror to the innocent, and

the present is a day of still greater terror to the guilty. The law was for a few moments like an arrow in the quiver, seemed to be of no use, and did no execution, now it is an arrow upon the string, and many who despised it lately, are trembling as they stand before the point of it.

I have talked more already than I have formerly done in three visits, you remember my taciturnity, never to be forgotten by those who knew me; not to depart entirely from what might be for aught I know, the most shining part of my character, I here shut my mouth, make my bow, and return to Olney.

W. C.

The next is a little more serious than its predecessor, yet equally a proof that the affections of his heart, and the energy of his mind, were now happily restored,

LETTER XXVII.

To Mrs. COWPER, Park-Street, Grosvenor-Square,

August 31, 1780.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I am obliged to you for your long Letter, which did not seem so, and for your short one, which was more than I had any reason to expect. Short as it was, it conveyed to me two interesting articles of intelligence. An account of your recovering from a fever, and of Lady Cowper's death.

The

The latter was, I suppose, to be expected, for by what remembrance I have of her Ladyship, who was never much acquainted with her, she had reached those years, that are always found upon the borders of another world. As for you, your time of life is comparatively of a youthful date. You may think of Death as much as you please (you cannot think of it too much) but I hope you will live to think of it many years.

It costs me not much difficulty to suppose that my friends who were already grown old, when I saw them last, are old still, but it costs me a good deal sometimes to think of those who were at that time young, as being older than they were. Not having been an eye-witness of the change that time has made in them, and my former idea of them not being corrected by observation, it remains the same ; my memory presents me with this image unimpaired, and while it retains the resemblance of what they were, forgets that by this time the picture may have lost much of its likeness, through the alteration that succeeding years have made in the original. I know not what impressions time may have made upon your person, for while his claws (as our Grannams called them) strike deep furrows in some faces, he seems to sheath them with much tenderness, as if fearful of doing injury to others. But though an enemy to the person, he is a friend to the mind, and you have found him so. Though even in this respect his treatment of us depends upon what he meets with at our hands; if we use him well, and listen

to his admonitions, he is a friend indeed, but otherwise the worst of enemies, who takes from us daily something that we valued, and gives us nothing better in its stead. It is well with them, who like you can stand a tip-toe on the mountain-top of human life, look down with pleasure upon the valley they have passed, and sometimes stretch their wings in joyful hope of a happy flight into Eternity. Yet a little while, and your hope will be accomplished.

When you can favour me with a little account of your own family without inconvenience, I shall be glad to receive it, for though separated from my kindred by little more than half a century of miles, I know as little of their concerns as if oceans and continents were interposed between us.

Yours, my dear Cousin,

W. COWPER.

The following Letter to Mr. Hill contains a Poem already printed in the Works of Cowper; but the reader will probably be gratified in finding a little favourite piece of pleasantry introduced to him, as it was originally dispatched by the Author for the amusement of a friend.

LETTER XXVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

December 25, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Weary with rather a long walk in the snow, I am not likely to write a very sprightly Letter, or to produce any

any thing that may cheer this gloomy season, unless I have recourse to my pocket-book, where perhaps I may find something to transcribe; something that was written before the sun had taken leave of our hemisphere, and when I was less fatigued than I am at present.

Happy is the man who knows just so much of the Law, as to make himself a little merry now and then with the solemnity of juridical proceedings. I have heard of common law judgments before now, indeed have been present at the delivery of some, that according to my poor apprehension, while they paid the utmost respect to the letter of the statute, have departed widely from the spirit of it, and being governed entirely by the point of law, have left equity, reason, and common-sense behind them at an infinite distance. You will judge whether the following report of a Case, drawn up by myself, be not a proof and illustration of this satirical assertion.

NOSE Plaintiff——EYES Defendants.

1.

Between Nose and Eyes a sad contest arose,

The Spectacles set them unhappily wrong,

The point in dispute was, as all the world knows,

To which the said Spectacles ought to belong.

So

2.

*So the Tongue was the Lawyer, and argued the cause,
With a great deal of skill, and a wig full of learning,
While chief Baron Ear, sat to balance the laws,
So fam'd for his talents at nicely discerning.*

3.

*In behalf of the Nose, it will quickly appear,
And your Lordship, he said, will undoubtedly find,
That the Nose has had Spectacles always in wear,
Which amounts to possession, time out of mind.*

4.

*Then holding the Spectacles up to the Court,
Your Lordship observes, they are made with a straddle,
As wide as the ridge of the Nose is, in short,
Design'd to sit close to it just like a saddle,*

5.

*Again, would your Lordship a moment suppose,
(Tis a case that has happen'd, and may be again)
That the visage or countenance had not a Nose,
Pray who would, or who could, wear Spectacles then?*

On

6.

*On the whole it appears, and my argument shows
With a reasoning the Court will never condemn,
That the Spectacles plainly were made for the Nose,
And the Nose was as plainly, intended for them.*

7.

*Then shifting his side, as a Lawyer knows how,
He pleaded again in behalf of the Eyes,
But what were his arguments few people know,
For the Court did not think they were equally wise.*

8.

*So his Lordship decreed, with a grave solemn tone,
Decisive and clear, without one if, or but,
That whenever the Nose put his Spectacles on
By day-light, or candle-light—Eyes should be shut !*

Yours affectionately,

W. COWPER.

LETTER XXIX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb. 15, 1781.

I am glad you were pleased with my report
of so extraordinary a case. If the thought of versifying the deci-
sions

sions of our Courts of Justice had struck me, while I had the honor to attend them, it would perhaps have been no difficult matter to have compiled a volume of such amusing and interesting precedents; which if they wanted the eloquence of the Greek or Roman oratory, would have amply compensated that deficiency by the harmony of rhyme and metre.

Your account of my Uncle and your Mother gave me great pleasure. I have long been afraid to inquire after some in whose welfare I always feel myself interested, lest the question should produce a painful answer. Longevity is the lot of so few, and is so seldom rendered comfortable by the associations of good health and good spirits, that I could not very reasonably suppose either your relations or mine so happy in those respects, as it seems they are. May they continue to enjoy those blessings so long as the date of life shall last. I do not think that in these coster-monger days, as I have a notion Falstaff calls them, an antediluvian age is at all a desirable thing, but to live comfortably, while we do live, is a great matter, and comprehends in it every thing that can be wished for on this side the curtain that hangs between Time and Eternity.

Farewell my better Friend than any I have to boast of either among the Lords, or Gentlemen of the House of Commons.

Yours ever,

WM. COWPER.

The

The reviving Poet who had lived half a century with such a modest idea of his own extraordinary talents, that he had hitherto given no composition professedly to the public, now amused himself with preparations to appear as an Author. But he hoped to conduct those preparations with a modest secrecy, and was astonished to find one of his intimate friends apprized of his design.

LETTER XXX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

May 9, 1781.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am in the Press, and it is in vain to deny it. But how mysterious is the conveyance of intelligence from one end to the other of your great city!—Not many days since, except one man, and he but little taller than yourself, all London was ignorant of it; for I do not suppose that the public prints have yet announced the most agreeable tidings, the title-page, which is the basis of the advertisement, having so lately reached the publisher; and now it is known to you, who live at least two miles distant from my confidant upon the occasion.

My labours are principally the production of the last winter; all indeed, except a few of the minor pieces. When I can find no other occupation, I think, and when I think, I am very apt to do it in rhyme. Hence it comes to pass that the season of the year which generally pinches off the flowers of poetry, unfolds mine, such as

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they

they are, and crowns me with a winter garland. In this respect therefore, I and my cotemporary Bards are by no means upon a par. They write when the delightful influences of fine weather, fine prospects, and a brisk motion of the animal spirits, make Poetry almost the language of nature ; and I, when icicles depend from all the leaves of the Parnassian laurel, and when a reasonable man would as little expect to succeed in verse, as to hear a Black-bird whistle. This must be my apology to you for whatever want of fire and animation you may observe in what you will shortly have the perusal of. As to the Public if they like me not there is no remedy. A friend will weigh and consider all disadvantages, and make as large allowances as an Author can wish, and larger perhaps than he has any right to expect ; but not so the World at large ; whatever they do not like, they will not by any apology be persuaded to forgive, and it would be in vain to tell *them* that I wrote my verses in January, for they would immediately reply, " Why did not you write them in May ?" A question that might puzzle a wiser head than we Poets are generally blessed with.

I was informed by Mrs. Unwin that she strongly solicited her Friend to devote his thoughts to Poetry, of considerable extent, on his recovery from his very long fit of mental dejection, suggesting to him, at the same time, the first subject of his Song, " The Progress of Error!", which the reader will recollect as the second Poem
in

in his first volume. The time when that volume was completed, and the motives of its excellent Author for giving it to the world, are clearly displayed in the following very interesting letter to his fair poetical Cousin.

LETTER XXXI.

To Mrs. COWPER.

October 19, 1781.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Your fear lest I should think you unworthy of my correspondence on account of your delay to answer, may change sides now, and more properly belongs to me. It is long since I received your last, and yet I believe I can say truly that not a post has gone by me since the receipt of it, that has not reminded me of the debt I owe you, for your obliging and unreserved communications both in prose and verse, especially for the latter, because I consider them as marks of your peculiar confidence. The truth is, I have been such a verse-maker myself, and so busy in preparing a volume for the press, which I imagine will make its appearance in the course of the winter, that I hardly had leisure to listen to the calls of any other engagement. It is however finished, and gone to the Printer's, and I have nothing now to do with it, but to correct the sheets as they are sent to me, and consign it over to the judgment of the Public. It is a bold undertaking at this time of day, when so many writers of the greatest abilities have gone before, who seem to have anticipated every va-

luable subject, as well as all the graces of poetical embellishment, to step forth into the world in the character of a Bard, especially when it is considered that luxury, idleness, and vice have debauched the public taste, and that nothing hardly is welcome, but childish fiction, or what has at least a tendency to excite a laugh. I thought however that I had stumbled upon some subjects that had never before been poetically treated, and upon some others, to which I imagined it would not be difficult to give an air of novelty, by the manner of treating them. My sole drift is to be useful ; a point which however, I knew, I should in vain aim at, unless I could be likewise entertaining. I have therefore fixed these two strings upon my bow, and by the help of both have done my best to send my arrow to the mark. My readers will hardly have begun to laugh, before they will be called upon to correct that levity, and peruse me with a more serious air. As to the effect, I leave it alone in his hands who can alone produce it ; neither prose nor verse, can reform the manners of a dissolute age, much less can they inspire a sense of religious obligation, unless assisted and made efficacious by the power who superintends the truth he has vouchsafed to impart.

You made my heart ach with a sympathetic sorrow, when you described the state of your mind on occasion of your late visit into Hartfordshire. Had I been previously informed of your journey before you made it, I should have been able to have foretold
all

all your feelings with the most unerring certainty of prediction. You will never cease to feel upon that subject, but with your principles of resignation and acquiescence in the divine will, you will always feel as becomes a Christian. We are forbidden to murmur, but we are not forbidden to regret; and whom we loved tenderly while living, we may still pursue with an affectionate remembrance, without having any occasion to charge ourselves with rebellion against the Sovereignty that appointed a separation. A day is coming, when I am confident, you will see and know, that mercy to both parties was the principal agent in a scene, the recollection of which is still painful.

Those who read what the Poet has here said of his intended publication, may perhaps think it strange, that it was introduced to the world with a Preface not written by himself, but by his friend, Mr. Newton. The circumstance is singular; but it arose from two amiable peculiarities in the character of Cowper, his extreme diffidence in regard to himself, and his kind eagerness to gratify the affectionate ambition of a friend, whom he tenderly esteemed! Mr. Newton has avowed the fervency of this ambition in a very ingenuous and manly manner, and they must have little candor indeed, who are disposed to cavil at his alacrity in presenting himself to the public as the bosom friend of that incomparable Author, whom he had attended so faithfully in sickness and in sorrow!—I hope it is no sin-
to

to covet honour as the Friend of Cowper, for, if it is, I fear I may say but too truly in the words of Shakespeare,

"I am the most offending soul alive."

Happy however if I may be able so to conduct, and finish this biographical compilation, that those, who knew and loved him best, may be the most willing to applaud me as his Friend; a title, that my heart prefers to all other distinction!

The immediate success of his first volume was very far from being equal to its extraordinary merit. For some time it seemed to be neglected by the Public, although the first Poem in the collection contains such a powerful image of its Author, as might be thought sufficient not only to excite attention, but to secure attachment: for Cowper had undesignedly executed a masterly portrait of himself, in describing the true Poet: I allude to the following Verses in "Table Talk."

*Nature, exerting an unwearied power,
Forms, opens, and gives scent to every flower;
Spreads the fresh verdure of the field, and leads
The dancing Naiads thro' the dewy meads:
She fills profuse ten thousand little throats
With music, modulating all their notes;
And charms the woodland scenes, and wilds unknown
With artless airs, and concerts of her own;*

But

But seldom (as if fearful of expence)
Vouchsafes to Man a Poet's just pretence—
Fervency, freedom, fluency of thought,
Harmony, strength, words exquisitely sought ;
Fancy, that from the bow that spans the sky
Brings colours, dipt in Heaven, that never die ;
A soul exalted above earth, a mind
Skill'd in the characters that form mankind ;
And, as the Sun in rising beauty drest
Looks from the dappled orient to the West,
And marks, whatever clouds may interpose,
Ere yet his race begins, its glorious close,
An eye like his to catch the distant goal,
Or, ere the wheels of verse begin to roll,
Like his to shed illuminating rays
On every scene and subject it surveys :
Thus grac'd, the Man asserts a Poet's name,
And the world cheerfully admits the claim.

The concluding lines may be considered as an omen of that celebrity, which such a Writer, in the process of time, could not fail to obtain.—Yet powerful as the claims of Cowper were to instant admiration and applause, it must be allowed (as an apology for the inattention of the Public) that he hazarded some sentiments in his first volume, which were very likely to obstruct its immediate success in the world. I particularly allude to his bold eulogy on Whitfield, whom the dramatic satire of Foote, in his Comedy of the

the Minor, had taught the nation to deride as a mischievous fanatic. I allude also to a little acrimonious censure, in which he had indulged himself, against one of Whitfield's devout rivals, Mr. Charles Wesley, for allowing sacred music to form a part of his occupation in a sunday evening. Such praise, and such reproof, might easily induce many careless readers, unacquainted with the singular mildness and purity of character that really belonged to the new Poet, to reject his book, without giving it a fair perusal, as the production of a Recluse, inflamed with the fierce spirit of bigotry. No supposition could have been wider from the truth; for Cowper was indeed a rare example of true Christian benevolence: yet, as the best of men have their little occasional foibles, he allowed himself, sometimes with his pen, but never I believe in conversation, to speak rather acrimoniously of several pursuits and pastimes, that seem not to deserve any austerity of reproof. Of this he was aware himself, and confessed it, in the most ingenuous manner, on the following occasion. One of his intimate friends had written, in the first Volume of his Poems, the following passage from the younger Pliny, as descriptive of the Book: "*Multa tenuiter, multa sublimiter, multa venuste, multa tenere, multa dulciter, multa cum bile.*" Many passages are delicate, many sublime, many beautiful, many tender, many sweet, many acrimonious.

Cowper

Cowper was pleased with the application, and said, with the utmost candour and sincerity, "The latter part is very true indeed; yes! yes! there are "*multa cum bile*" many acrimonious."

These little occasional touches of austerity would naturally arise in a life so sequestered: but how just a subject of surprize and admiration is it, to behold an author starting under such a load of disadvantages, and displaying on the sudden such a variety of excellence! For neglected, as it was, for a few years, the first Volume of Cowper exhibits such a diversity of poetical powers, as have been given very rarely indeed to any individual of the modern, or of the antient world. He is not only great in passages of pathos, and sublimity, but he is equally admirable in wit and humour. After descanting most copiously on sacred subjects, with the animation of a Prophet, and the simplicity of an Apostle, he paints the ludicrous characters of common life with the comic force of Moliere; particularly in his Poem on Conversation, and his exquisite portrait of a fretful temper; a piece of moral painting so highly finished, and so happily calculated to promote good humour, that a transcript of the Verses shall close the First Part of these Memoirs.

*Some fretful tempers wince at every touch ;
You always do too little, or too much :
You speak with life, in hopes to entertain ;
Your elevated voice goes through the brain :*

*You fall at once into a lower key ;
That's worse :—the drone-pipe of an humble Bee !
The Southern sash admits too strong a light ;
You rise and drop the curtain :—now its night.
He shakes with cold ;—you stir the fire, and strive
To make a blaze :—that's roasting him alive.
Serve him with Ven'son, and he chuses Fish ;
With Soal—that's just the sort he would not wish.
He takes what he at first profess'd to loath ;
And in due time feeds heartily on both ;
Yet, still o'erclouded with a constant frown ;
He does not swallow, but he gulps it down.
Your hope to please him vain on every plan,
Himself should work that wonder, if he can.
Alas ! his efforts double his distress ;
He likes your's little, and his own still less.
Thus always teasing others, always teaz'd,
His only pleasure is—to be displeas'd.*

END OF THE FIRST PART.

THE

THE
LIFE
OF
C O W P E R.

PART THE SECOND.

Ανὴρ ἡδίστος αἰοῖδων.

A New æra opens in the history of the Poet, from an incident that gave fresh ardour and vivacity to his fertile imagination. In September, 1781, he happened to form an acquaintance with a Lady, highly accomplished herself, and singularly happy in animating and directing the fancy of her poetical friends. The World will perfectly agree with me in this eulogy, when I add, that to this lady we are primarily indebted for the Poem of the Task, for the Ballad of John Gilpin, and for the Translation of Homer. But in my lively sense of her merit, I am almost forgetting my immediate duty, as the Biographer of the Poet, to introduce her circumstantially to the acquaintance of my reader.

A lady, whose name was Jones, was one of the few neighbours admitted in the residence of the retired Poet. She was the wife of a Clergyman, who resided at the village of Clifton, within a mile

of Olney. Her sister, the widow of Sir Robert Austen, Baronet, came to pass some time with her in the Autumn of 1781; and as the two ladies chanced to call at a shop in Olney, opposite to the house of Mrs. Unwin, Cowper observed them from his window.—Although naturally shy, and now rendered more so by his very long illness, he was so struck with the appearance of the stranger, that on hearing she was sister to Mrs. Jones, he requested Mrs. Unwin to invite them to tea. So strong was his reluctance to admit the company of strangers, that after he had occasioned this invitation, he was for a long time unwilling to join the little party; but having forced himself at last to engage in conversation with Lady Austen, he was so reanimated by her uncommon colloquial talents, that he attended the ladies on their return to Clifton, and from that time continued to cultivate the regard of his new acquaintance with such assiduous attention, that she soon received from him the familiar and endearing title of Sister Ann.

The great and happy influence, which an incident, that seems at first sight so trivial, produced very rapidly on the imagination of Cowper, will best appear from the following Epistle, which, soon after Lady Austen's return to London for the winter, the Poet addressed to her, on the 17th of December, 1781.

*Dear Anna—Between friend and friend,
Prose answers every common end;*

Serves

*Serves, in a plain, and homely way,
T' express th' occurrence of the day ;
Our health, the weather, and the news ;
What walks we take, what books we chuse ;
And all the floating thoughts, we find
Upon the surface of the mind.*

*But when a Poet takes the pen,
Far more alive than other men,
He feels a gentle tingling come
Down to his finger and his thumb,
Deriv'd from nature's noblest part,
The centre of a glowing heart !
And this is what the world, who knows
No flights, above the pitch of prose,
His more sublime vagaries slighting,
Denominates an itch for writing.
No wonder I, who scribble rhyme,
To catch the triflers of the time,
And tell them truths divine, and clear,
Which couch'd in prose, they will not hear ;
Who labour hard to allure, and draw
The loiterers I never saw,
Should feel that itching, and that tingling,
With all my purpose intermingling,
To your intrinsic merit true,
When call'd to address myself to you.*

Mysterious

*Mysterious are his ways, whose power
 Brings forth that unexpected hour,
 When minds, that never met before,
 Shall meet, unite, and part no more:
 It is th' allotment of the skies,
 The Hand of the Supreme Wise,
 That guides and governs our affections,
 And plans, and orders our connexions;
 Directs us in our distant road,
 And marks the bounds of our abode.
 Thus we were settled when you found us,
 Peasants and children all around us,
 Not dreaming of so dear a friend,
 Deep in the abyss of Silver-End.*
 Thus Martha, ev'n against her will,
 Perch'd on the top of yonder hill;
 And you, though you must needs prefer
 The fairer scenes of sweet Sancerre,†
 Aro come from distant Loire, to chuse
 A cottage on the banks of Ouse.
 This page of Providence, quite new,
 And now just opening to our view,
 Employs our present thoughts and pains,
 To guess, and spell, what it contains:*

But

* An obscure part of Olney, adjoining to the residence of Cowper, which faced the market-place.

† Lady Austen's residence in France.

*But day by day, and year by year,
 Will mark the dark ænigma clear ;
 And furnish us perhaps at last,
 Like other scenes already past,
 With proof, that we, and our affairs
 Are part of a Jehovah's cares :
 For God unfolds, by slow degrees,
 The purport of his deep decrees ;
 Sheds every hour a clearer light
 In aid of our defective sight ;
 And spreads at length, before the soul,
 A beautiful, and perfect whole,
 Which busy man's inventive brain
 Toils to anticipate in vain.*

*Say Anna, had you never known
 The beauties of a Rose full-blown,
 Could you, tho' luminous your eye,
 By looking on the bud, descry,
 Or guess, with a prophetic power,
 The future splendor of the flower ?
 Just so th' Omnipotent who turns
 The system of a world's concerns,
 From mere minutiae can educe
 Events of most important use ;
 And bid a dawning sky display
 The blaze of a meridian day.
 The works of man tend, one and all,
 As needs they must, from great to small ;*

And

*And vanity absorbs at length
The monuments of human strength.
But who can tell how vast the plan,
Which this day's incident began?
Too small perhaps the slight occasion
For our dim-sighted observation;
It pass'd unnotic'd, as the bird
That cleaves the yielding air unheard,
And yet may prove, when understood,
An harbinger of endless good.*

*Not that I deem, or mean to call
Friendship a blessing cheap, or small;
But merely to remark, that ours,
Like some of nature's sweetest flowers,
Rose from a seed of tiny size,
That seem'd to promise no such prize:
A transient visit intervening,
And made almost without a meaning,
(Hardly the effect of inclination,
Much less of pleasing expectation!)
Produc'd a friendship, then begun,
That has cemented us in one;
And plac'd it in our power to prove,
By long fidelity and love,
That Solomon has wisely spoken;
"A three-fold cord is not soon broken."*

In this interesting Poem the Author expresses a lively and devout presage of the superior productions, that were to arise in the process

process of time, from a friendship so unexpected, and so pleasing ; but he does not seem to have been aware, in the slightest degree, of the evident dangers that must naturally attend an intimacy so very close, yet perfectly innocent, between a Poet and two Ladies, who, with very different mental powers, had each reason to flatter herself that she could agreeably promote the studies, and animate the fancy of this fascinating Bard.

Genius of the most exquisite kind is sometimes, and perhaps generally, so modest, and diffident, as to require continual solicitation and encouragement, from the voice of sympathy, and friendship, to lead it into permanent and successful exertion. Such was the genius of Cowper ; and he therefore considered the chearful and animating society of his new accomplished Friend, as a blessing conferred on him by the signal favour of Providence. She returned the following summer to the house of her sister, situated on the brow of a hill, the foot of which is washed by the River Ouse, as it flows between Clifton and Olney. Her benevolent ingenuity was exerted to guard the spirits of Cowper from sinking again into that hypochondriacal dejection, to which, even in her company, he still sometimes discovered an alarming tendency. To promote his occupation and amusement, she furnished him with a small portable Printing-Press, and he gratefully sent her the following Verses printed by himself, and enclosed in a billet that alludes to the occasion on which they were composed—a very unseasonable flood, that interrupted the communication between Clifton and Olney.

*To watch the storms, and hear the sky
 Give all our Almanacks the lie ;
 To shake with cold, and see the plains
 In Autumn drown'd with Wintry rains ;
 'Tis thus I spend my moments here,
 And wish myself a Dutch Mynheer ;
 I then should have no need of wit ;
 For lumpish Hollander unfit !
 Nor should I then repine at mud,
 Or meadows delug'd with a flood ;
 But in a bog live well content,
 And find it just my element ;
 Should be a clod, and not a man.
 Nor wish in vain for Sister Ann,
 With charitable aid to drag
 My mind out of its proper quag ;
 Should have the genius of a boor,
 And no ambition to have more.*

“MY DEAR SISTER,

You see my beginning—I do not know
 but in time I may proceed even to the printing of halfpenny Bal-
 lads—Excuse the coarseness of my paper—I wasted such a quan-
 tity before I could accomplish any thing legible, that I could not
 afford finer. I intend to employ an ingenious mechanic of the
 town to make me a longer case : for you may observe, that my lines
 turn up their tails like Dutch mastiffs, so difficult do I find it to
 make the two halves exactly coincide with each other.

We

We wait with impatience for the departure of this unseasonable flood—We think of you, and talk of you, but we can do no more, till the waters shall subside. I do not think our correspondence should drop because we are within a mile of each other. It is but an imaginary approximation, the flood having in reality as effectually parted us, as if the British Channel rolled between us.

Yours my dear Sister, with Mrs. Unwin's best love.

W. COWPER.

August 12, 1782.

A flood that precluded him from the conversation of such an enlivening friend, was to Cowper a serious evil; but he was happily relieved from the apprehension of such disappointment in future, by seeing the friend so pleasing and so useful to him very comfortably settled, as his next door neighbour.

Lady Austen became a tenant of the Parsonage in Olney; when Mr. Newron occupied that Parsonage, he had opened a door in the garden-wall, that admitted him, in the most commodious manner, to visit the sequestered Poet, who resided in the next house. Lady Austen had the advantage of this easy intercourse, and so captivating was her society, both to Cowper, and to Mrs. Unwin, that these intimate neighbours might be almost said to make one family, as it became their custom to dine always together, alternately in the houses of the two ladies.

The musical talents of Lady Austen induced Cowper to write a few Songs of peculiar sweetness and pathos, to suit particular airs that she was accustomed to play on the harpsichord. I insert three of these as proofs, that even in his hours of social amusement, the Poet loved to dwell on ideas of tender devotion, and pathetic solemnity.

S O N G,

WRITTEN IN THE SUMMER OF 1783, AT THE REQUEST OF
LADY AUSTEN.

AIR—"My fond Shepherds of late, &c."

*No longer I follow a sound;
No longer a dream I pursue :
O Happiness, not to be found,
Unattainable treasure, adieu !*

*I have sought thee in splendor and dress ;
In the regions of pleasure and taste :
I have sought thee, and seem'd to possess,
But have prov'd thee a vision at last.*

*An humble ambition and hope
The voice of true wisdom inspires ;
'Tis sufficient, if Peace be the scope,
And the summit of all our desires.*

Peace

*Peace may be the lot of the mind,
That seeks it in meekness and love ;
But rapture and bliss are confin'd
To the glorified Spirits above.*

S O N G 2.

AIR—"The Lass of Pattie's Mill."

*When all within is peace,
How Nature seems to smile !
Delights that never cease,
The livelong day beguile.
From morn to dewy eve,
With open hand she showers,
Fresh blessings, to deceive,
And soothe the silent hours.*

*It is content of heart,
Gives Nature power to please ;
The mind that feels no smart,
Enlivens all it sees ;
Can make a wintry sky
Seem bright as smiling May,
And evening's closing eye
As peep of early day.*

The

*The vast majestic globe,
 So beauteously array'd
 In Nature's various robe,
 With wond'rous skill display'd,
 Is, to a mourner's heart,
 A dreary wild at best :
 It flutters to depart,
 And longs to be at rest.*

I add the following Song (adapted to the March in Scipio) for two reasons ; because it is pleasing to promote the celebrity of a brave man, calamitously cut off in his career of honor, and because the Song was a favourite production of the Poet's ; so much so, that, in a season of depressive illness, he amused himself by translating it into Latin verse.

S O N G 3.

ON THE LOSS OF THE ROYAL GEORGE.

*Toll for the Brave !
 The Brave ! that are no more !
 All sunk beneath the wave,
 Fast by their native shore.*

*Eight hundred of the Brave,
 Whose courage well was tried,
 Has made the vessel heel,
 And laid her on her side.*

A land

*A land breeze shook the shrouds,
And she was overset ;
Down went the Royal George,
With all her crew complete.*

*Toll for the Brave !
Brave Kempenfelt is gone ;
His last sea-fight is fought ;
His work of glory done.*

*It was not in the battle ;
No tempest gave the shock ;
She sprang no fatal leak ;
She ran upon no rock.*

*His sword was in its sheath ;
His fingers held the pen,
When Kempenfelt went down,
With twice four hundred men.*

*Weigh the vessel up,
Once dreaded by our foes !
And mingle with our cup,
The tear that England owes.*

*Her timbers yet are sound,
And she may float again,
Full-charg'd with England's thunder,
And plough the distant main.*

But

*But Kempenfelt is gone,
His victories are o'er ;
And he and his eight hundred,
Shall plough the wave no more.*

Let the reader, who wishes to impress on his mind a just idea of the variety and extent of Cowper's poetical powers, contrast this heroic Ballad, of exquisite pathos, with his diverting history of John Gilpin !

That admirable, and highly popular piece of pleasantry was composed at the period of which I am now speaking. An elegant and judicious Writer, who has recently favoured the public with three interesting volumes relating to the early Poets of our country, conjectures, that a Poem, written by the celebrated Sir Thomas Moore in his youth (the merry jest of the Serjeant and Frere) may have suggested to Cowper his tale of John Gilpin ; but that fascinating Ballad had a different origin ; and it is a very remarkable fact, that full of gaiety and humour, as this favourite of the public has abundantly proved itself to be, it was really composed at a time, when the spirit of the Poet, as he informed me himself, was very deeply tinged with his depressive malady. It happened one afternoon, in those years when his accomplished friend Lady Austen made a part of his little evening circle, that she observed him sinking into encreasing dejection ; it was her custom, on these occasions,

to try all the resources of her sprightly powers for his immediate relief. She told him the story of John Gilpin (which had been treasured in her memory from her childhood) to dissipate the gloom of the passing hour. Its effect on the fancy of Cowper had the air of enchantment: he informed her the next morning, that convulsions of laughter, brought on by his recollection of her story, had kept him waking during the greatest part of the night; and that he had turned it into a Ballad.—So arose the pleasant poem of John Gilpin: It was eagerly copied, and finding its way rapidly to the Newspapers, it was seized by the lively spirit of Henderson, the Comedian, a man, like the Yorick described by Shakespeare, “of infinite jest, and most excellent fancy,” it was seized by Henderson as a proper subject for the display of his own comic powers, and by reciting it, in his Public Readings, he gave uncommon celebrity to the Ballad, before the public suspected to what Poet they were indebted for the sudden burst of ludicrous amusement. Many readers were astonished when the Poem made its first authentic appearance in the second volume of Cowper. In some Letters of the Poet to Mr. Hill, which did not reach me till my Work was nearly finished, I find an account of John Gilpin’s first introduction to the world, and a circumstance relating to the first Volume of Cowper’s Poems, which may render the following selection from this correspondence peculiarly interesting.

LETTER XXXII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Feb. 13, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

In writing to you I never want a subject. Self is always at hand, and Self with its concerns is always interesting to a friend.

You may think perhaps that having commenced Poet by profession, I am always writing Verses. Not so—I have written nothing, at least finished nothing, since I published—except a certain facetious history of John Gilpin, which Mrs. Unwin would send to the Public Advertiser, perhaps you might read it without suspecting the Author.

My Book procures me favours, which my modesty will not permit me to specify, except one, which, modest as I am, I cannot suppress, a very handsome Letter from Dr. Franklin, at Passy—These fruits it has brought me.

I have been refreshing myself with a walk in the garden, where I find that January (who according to Chaucer was the husband of May) being dead, February has married the widow.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Olney, Feb. 20, 1783.

Suspecting that I should not have hinted at Dr. Franklin's encomium under any other influence than that of vanity, I was several times on the point of burning my Letter for that very reason. But not having time to write another by the same post, and believing that you would have the grace to pardon a little self-complacency in an Author on so trying an occasion, I let it pass. One sin naturally leads to another, and a greater, and thus it happens now; for I have no way to gratify your curiosity, but by transcribing the Letter in question. It is addressed by the way, not to me, but to an acquaintance of mine, who had transmitted the Volume to him without my knowledge.

“ Sir,

Passy, May 8, 1782.

I received the Letter you did me the honour of writing to me, and am much obliged by your kind present of a Book. The relish for reading of Poetry had long since left me, but there is something so new in the manner, so easy and yet so correct in the language, so clear in the expression, yet concise, and so just in the sentiments, that I have read the whole with great pleasure, and some of the pieces more than once. I beg you to accept my thankful acknowledgements, and to present my respects to the Author.

Your most obedient humble Servant,

B. Franklin.”

LETTER XXXIV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Great revolutions happen in this Ant's nest of ours. One Emmet of illustrious character, and great abilities pushes out another, parties are formed, they range themselves in formidable opposition, they threaten each other's ruin, they cross over, and are mingled together, and like the coruscations of the Northern Aurora, amuse the spectator, at the same time that by some they are supposed to be forerunners of a general dissolution.

There are political earthquakes as well as natural ones, the former less shocking to the eye, but not always less fatal in their influence than the latter. The image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was made up of heterogeneous and incompatible materials, and accordingly broken. Whatever is so formed must expect a like catastrophe.

I have an Etching of the late Chancellor, hanging over the parlour chimney. I often contemplate it, and call to mind the day when I was intimate with the original. It is very like him, but he is disguised by his hat, which though fashionable is awkward, by his great wig, the tie of which is hardly discernable in profile, and by his band and gown, which give him an appearance clumsily sacerdotal. Our friendship is dead and buried, yours is the only surviving one of all with which I was once honoured. Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XXXV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

May 26, 1783.

I feel for my Uncle, and do not wonder that his loss afflicts him. A connection that has subsisted so many years could not be rent asunder without great pain to the survivor. I hope, however, and doubt not but when he has had a little more time for recollection, he will find that consolation in his own family, which is not the lot of every father to be blessed with. It seldom happens that married persons live together so long, or so happily : but this which one feels oneself ready to suggest as matter of alleviation, is the very circumstance that aggravates his distress; therefore he misses her the more, and feels that he can but ill spare her. It is however a necessary tax, which all who live long must pay for their longevity, to lose many whom they would be glad to detain, (perhaps those in whom all their happiness is centered) and to see them step into the grave before them. In one respect at least this is a merciful appointment. When life has lost that to which it owed its principal relish, we may ourselves the more chearfully resign it. I beg you would present him with my most affectionate remembrance, and tell him, if you think fit, how much I wish that the evening of his long day may be serene and happy.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVI.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

October 20, 1783.

I should not have been thus long silent, had I known with certainty where a letter of mine might find you. Your summer excursions however are now at an end, and addressing a line to you in the centre of the busy scene, in which you spend your winter, I am pretty sure of my mark.

I see the winter approaching without much concern, though a passionate lover of fine weather, and the pleasant scenes of summer ; but the long evenings have their comforts too, and there is hardly to be found upon the earth, I suppose, so snug a creature as an Englishman by his fire-side in the winter. I mean however an Englishman that lives in the country, for in London it is not very easy to avoid intrusion. I have two ladies to read to, sometimes more, but never less—at present we are circumnavigating the globe, and I find the old story with which I amused myself some years since, through the great felicity of a memory not very retentive, almost new. I am however sadly at a loss for Cook's Voyage, can you send it? I shall be glad of Foster's too. These together will make the winter pass merrily, and you will much oblige me.



The last Letter contains a slight sketch of those happy winter evenings, which the Poet has painted so exquisitely in verse. The
two

two ladies whom he mentions as his constant auditors were Mrs. Unwin and Lady Austen. The Public, already indebted to the friendly and chearful spirit of the latter for the pleasant Ballad of John Gilpin, had soon to thank her inspiring benevolence for a work of superior dignity, the very master-piece of Cowper's unbounded imagination!

This lady happened, as an admirer of Milton, to be partial to blank verse, and often solicited her poetical friend to try his powers in that species of composition. After repeated solicitation, he promised her, if she would furnish the subject, to comply with her request.—“Oh,” she replied, “you can never be in want of a subject:—you can write upon any:—write upon this Sofa!” The Poet obeyed her command, and from the lively repartee of familiar conversation arose a Poem of many thousand verses, unexampled perhaps both in its origin and its excellence! A Poem of such infinite variety, that it seems to include every subject, and every style, without any dissonance or disorder; and to have flowed, without effort, from inspired philanthropy, eager to impress upon the hearts of all readers whatever may lead them most happily to the full enjoyment of human life, and to the final attainment of Heaven.

A great part of the Task appears to have been composed in the winter—a circumstance the more remarkable, as the wintery months were generally unfavourable to the health of the Poet. In
the

the commencement of the Poem he marks both the season, and the year, in the tender address to his companion.

*"Whose arm this twentieth Winter I perceive
Fast lock'd in mine."*

These expressions had induced me to suppose that the Task was begun in the winter of 1784, but a variety of circumstances convinced me that the passage which I had cited, as marking the æra of its commencement, was added in the course of a revisal, and probably in the following year.

I select a series of passages from Cowper's Letters to his friend Mr. Bull, in which the Poet has described his own progress in his most interesting composition.

August 3, 1783—"Your sea-side situation, your beautiful prospects, your fine rides, and the sight of the palaces, which you have seen, we have not envied you; but are glad, that you have enjoyed them. Why should we envy any man? Is not our greenhouse a cabinet of perfumes? It is at this moment fronted with carnations and balsams, with mignonette and roses, with jessamine and woodbine, and wants nothing but your pipe to make it truly Arabian;—a wilderness of sweets! The Sofa is ended, but not finished, a paradox, which your natural acumen, sharpened by habits of logical attention, will enable you to reconcile in a moment.

ment. Do not imagine, however, that I lounge over it—on the contrary, I find it severe exercise, to mould and fashion it to my mind !”

Feb. 22, 1784, “I congratulate you on the thaw—I suppose it is an universal blessing, and probably felt all over Europe. I myself am the better for it, who wanted nothing, that might make the frost supportable; what reason, therefore, have they to rejoice, who being in want of all things, were exposed to its utmost rigour?—The ice in my ink, however, is not yet dissolved—It was long before the frost seized it, but at last it prevailed—The *Sofa* has consequently received little or no addition since—It consists at present of four Books, and part of a fifth: when the sixth is finished, the work is accomplished, but if I may judge by my present inability, that period is at a considerable distance.

The following extract not only mentions the completion of his great Work, but gives a particular account of his next production.

November 8, 1784—“The Task, as you know, is gone to the Press: since it went I have been employed in writing another Poem, which I am now transcribing, and which, in a short time, I design shall follow. It is entitled *Tirocinium*, or a Review of Schools: the business and purpose of it are, to censure the want of discipline, and the scandalous inattention to morals, that obtain

in them ; especially in the largest ; and to recommend private tuition as a mode of education preferable on all accounts ; to call upon fathers to become tutors of their own sons, where that is practicable ; to take home to them a domestic tutor, where it is not ; and if neither can be done, to place them under the care of such a man, as he, to whom I am writing ; some rural Parson, whose attention is limited to a few."

The Year 1784, was a memorable period in the life of the Poet, not only as it witnessed the completion of one extensive work, and the commencement of another, (his Translation of Homer) but as it terminated his intercourse with that highly pleasing and valuable friend, whose alacrity of attention and advice, had induced him to engage in both.

Delightful and advantageous as his friendship with Lady Austen had proved, he now began to feel, that it grew impossible to preserve that triple cord, which his own pure heart had led him to suppose, not speedily to be broken. Mrs. Unwin, though by no means destitute of mental accomplishments, was eclipsed by the brilliancy of the Poet's new friend, and naturally became uneasy under the apprehension of being so, for to a woman of sensibility, what evil can be more afflicting, than the fear of losing all mental influence over a man of genius and virtue, whom she has been long accustomed to inspire and to guide ?

Cowper

Cowper perceived the painful necessity of sacrificing a great portion of his present gratifications. He felt, that he must relinquish that antient friend, whom he regarded as a venerable parent; or the new associate, whom he idolized, as a sister of a heart and mind peculiarly congenial to his own. His gratitude for past services of unexampled magnitude, and weight, would not allow him to hesitate, and with a resolution of delicacy, that do the highest honour to his feelings, he wrote a farewell Letter to Lady Austen, explaining, and lamenting the circumstances, that forced him to renounce the society of a friend, whose enchanting talents and kindness had proved so agreeably instrumental to the revival of his spirits, and to the exercise of his fancy.

The Letters addressed to Mr. Hill at this period, express in a most pleasing manner, the sensibility of Cowper.

LETTER XXXVII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Sept. 11, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have never seen Dr. Cotton's book, concerning which your Sisters question me, nor did I know, 'till you mentioned it, that he had written any thing newer than his Visions; I have no doubt that it is so far worthy of him, as to be pious and sensible, and I believe, no man living is better qualified

to write on such subjects, as his title seems to announce. Some years have passed since I heard from him, and considering his great age, it is probable that I shall hear from him no more, but I shall always respect him. He is truly a Philosopher, according to my judgment of the character, every tittle of his knowledge in natural subjects, being connected in his mind, with the firm belief of an Omnipotent Agent.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

LETTER XXXVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

To condole with you on the death of a Mother aged 87 would be absurd—Rather therefore, as is reasonable, I congratulate you on the almost singular felicity of having enjoyed the company of so amiable, and so near a relation so long. Your lot and mine in this respect have been very different, as indeed in almost every other. Your Mother lived to see you rise, at least to see you comfortably established in the world. Mine dying when I was six years old, did not live to see me sink in it. You may remember with pleasure while you live, a blessing vouchsafed to you so long, and I, while I live, must regret a comfort, of which I was deprived so early. I can truly say that not a week passes, (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day) in which I do not think

think of her. Such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for shewing it was so short. But the ways of God are equal—and when I reflect on the pangs she would have suffered, had she been a witness of all mine, I see more cause to rejoice than to mourn that she was hidden in the grave so soon.

We have as you say lost a lively and sensible neighbour in Lady Austen, but we have been long accustomed to a state of retirement, within one degree of solitude, and being naturally lovers of still life, can relapse into our former duality without being unhappy at the change. To me indeed a third is not necessary, while I can have the companion I have had these twenty years.

I am gone to the Press again; a Volume of mine will greet your hands some time either in the course of the winter, or early in the spring. You will find it perhaps on the whole more entertaining than the former, as it treats a greater variety of subjects, and those, at least the most, of a sublunary kind. It will consist of a Poem in six books, called the Task. To which will be added another which I finished yesterday, called I believe Tirocinium, on the subject of Education.

You perceive that I have taken your advice, and given the pen no rest.

LETTER XXXIX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

June 25, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I write in a nook that I call my *Boudoir*: It is a summer-house not much bigger than a sedan-chair, the door of which opens into the garden that is now crowded with pinks, roses, and honey-suckles, and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly served an Apothecary, now dead, as a smoking-room, and under my feet is a trap-door, which once covered a hole in the ground, where he kept his bottles. At present however it is dedicated to sublimer uses. Having lined it with garden mats, and furnished it with a table and two chairs, here I write all that I write in summer-time, whether to my friends, or to the public. It is secure from all noise, and a refuge from all intrusion; for intruders sometimes trouble me in the winter evenings at Olney. But thanks to my *Boudoir*, I can now hide myself from them, a Poet's retreat is sacred: they acknowledge the truth of that proposition, and never presume to violate it.

The last sentence puts me in mind to tell you, that I have ordered my Volume to your door. My Bookseller is the most dilatory of all his fraternity, or you would have received it long since: it is more than a month since I returned him the last proof, and consequently since the printing was finished. I sent him the

Manuscript

Manuscript at the beginning of last November, that he might publish while the town was full, and he will hit the exact moment when it is entirely empty. Patience you will perceive is in no situation exempted from the severest trials; a remark that may serve to comfort you under the numberless trials of your own.

W. C.

His second Volume, of whose delay in the Press he speaks so feelingly, was published in the Summer of 1785. It not only raised him to the summit of poetical reputation, but obtained for him a blessing infinitely dearer to his affectionate heart, another female friend, and lively associate, now providentially led to contribute to his comfort, when the advanced age and infirmities of Mrs. Unwin made such an acquisition of new, or rather revived friendship, a matter of infinite importance to the tranquility and welfare of the sequestered Poet.

The Lady to whom I allude had the advantage of being nearly related to Cowper. Their intercourse had been frequent, and endeared by reciprocal esteem in their early years, but the whirlwinds of life had driven them far from the sight of each other. During the Poet's long retirement his fair Cousin had passed some years with her Husband abroad, and others, after her return, in a variety of mournful

mournful duties. She was at this time a widow, and her indelible regard for her poetical relation, being agreeably inspirited by the publication of his recent works, she wrote to him, on that occasion, a very kind letter.

It gave rise to many from him, which I am particularly happy in being enabled to make a part of this Work, because they give a minute account of their admirable Author, at a very interesting period of his life; and because I persuade myself they will reflect peculiar honour on my departed Friend in various points of view, and lead the public to join with me in thinking that his Letters are rivals to his Poems, in the rare excellence of representing life and nature with graceful and endearing fidelity.

LETTER XL.

To Lady HESKETH, New Norfolk Street, Grosvenor-Square.

October 12, 1785.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

It is no new thing with you to give pleasure, but I will venture to say that you do not often give more than you gave me this morning. When I came down to breakfast, and found upon the table a Letter franked by my Uncle, and when opening that frank I found that it contained a Letter from you, I said within myself, this is just as it should be; we are all grown young again, and the days that I thought I should see no more, are
actually

actually returned. You perceive therefore that you judged well when you conjectured that a line from you would not be disagreeable to me. It could not be otherwise, than as in fact it proved, a most agreeable surprize, for I can truly boast of an affection for you that neither years, nor interrupted intercourse have at all abated. I need only recollect how much I valued you once, and with how much cause, immediately to feel a revival of the same value ; if that can be said to revive, which at the most has only been dormant for want of employment. But I slander it when I say that it has slept. A thousand times have I recollected a thousand scenes in which our two selves have formed the whole of the drama, with the greatest pleasure ; at times too when I had no reason to suppose that I should ever hear from you again. I have laughed with you at the Arabian Nights Entertainment, which afforded us, as you well know, a fund of merriment that deserves never to be forgot. I have walked with you to Nettley Abbey, and have scrambled with you over hedges in every direction, and many other feats we have performed together, upon the field of my remembrance, and all within these few years, should I say within this twelvemonth I should not transgress the truth. The hours that I have spent with you were among the pleasantest of my former days, and are therefore chronicled in my mind so deeply as to fear no erasure. Neither do I forget my poor friend Sir Thomas, I should remember him indeed at any rate on account of his personal kindness to myself, but the last testimony that he gave of his regard for you, endears

him to me still more. With his uncommon understanding (for with many peculiarities he had more sense than any of his acquaintance) and with his generous sensibilities, it was hardly possible that he should not distinguish you as he has done: as it was the last, so it was the best proof, that he could give of a judgment that never deceived him, when he would allow himself leisure to consult it.

You say that you have often heard of me: that puzzles me. I cannot imagine from what quarter, but it is no matter. I must tell you, however, my Cousin, that your information has been a little defective. That I am happy in my situation is true, I live and have lived these twenty years with Mrs. Unwin, to whose affectionate care of me during the far greater part of that time, it is, under Providence, owing that I live at all. But I do not account myself happy in having been for thirteen of those years in a state of mind that has made all that care and attention necessary. An attention, and a care, that have injured her health, and which, had she not been uncommonly supported, must have brought her to the grave. But I will pass to another subject; it would be cruel to particularize only to give pain, neither would I by any means give a sable hue to the first Letter of a correspondence so unexpectedly renewed.

I am delighted with what you tell me of my Uncle's good health; to enjoy any measure of cheerfulness at so late a day is
much,

much, but to have that late day enlivened with the vivacity of youth, is much more, and in these postdeluvian times a rarity indeed. Happy for the most part, are parents who have daughters. Daughters are not apt to outlive their natural affections, which a son has generally survived even before his boyish years are expired. I rejoice particularly in my Uncle's felicity, who has three female descendents from his little person, who leave him nothing to wish for upon that head.

My dear Cousin, dejection of spirits, which I suppose may have prevented many a man from becoming an Author, made me one. I find constant employment necessary, and therefore take care to be constantly employed. Manual occupations do not engage the mind sufficiently, as I know by experience, having tried many. But composition, especially of verse, absorbs it wholly. I write therefore generally three hours in a morning, and in an evening I transcribe. I read also, but less than I write, for I must have bodily exercise, and therefore never pass a day without it.

You ask me where I have been this summer. I answer at Olney. Should you ask me where I spent the last seventeen summers, I should still answer at Olney. Ay, and the winters also, I have seldom left it, and except when I attended my Brother in his last illness, never I believe a fortnight together.

Adieu, my beloved Cousin, I shall not always be thus nimble in reply, but shall always have great pleasure in answering you when I can.

Yours, my Friend and Cousin,

WM. COWPER.

LETTER XLI.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Nov. 9, 1785.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Whose last most affectionate Letter has run in my head ever since I received it, and which I now sit down to answer two days sooner than the post will serve me. I thank you for it, and with a warmth for which I am sure you will give me credit, though I do not spend many words in describing it. I do not seek *new* friends, not being altogether sure that I should find them, but have unspeakable pleasure in being still beloved by an old one. I hope that now our correspondence has suffered its last interruption, and that we shall go down together to the grave, chatting and chirping as merrily as such a scene of things as this will permit.

I am happy that my Poems have pleased you. My Volume has afforded me no such pleasure at any time, either while I was writing it,

it, or since its publication, as I have derived from yours, and my Uncle's opinion of it. I make certain allowances for partiality, and for that peculiar quickness of taste, with which you both relish what you like, and after all draw-backs upon those accounts duly made, find myself rich in the measure of your approbation that still remains. But above all I honour John Gilpin, since it was he who first encouraged you to write. I made him on purpose to laugh at, and he served his purpose well; but I am now in debt to him for a more valuable acquisition than all the laughter in the world amounts to, the recovery of my intercourse with you, which is to me inestimable. My benevolent and generous Cousin; when I was once asked if I wanted any thing, and given delicately enough to understand that the enquirer was ready to supply all my occasions, I thankfully and civilly, but positively declined the favour. I neither suffer, nor have suffered any such inconveniences as I had not much rather endure, than come under obligations of that sort to a person comparatively with yourself a stranger to me. But to you I answer otherwise. I know you thoroughly, and the liberality of your disposition; and have that consummate confidence in the sincerity of your wish to serve me, that delivers me from all awkward constraint, and from all fear of trespassing by acceptance. To you, therefore, I reply, yes. Whensoever and whatsoever, and in what manner soever you please; and add moreover, that my affection for the giver is such, as will encrease to me tenfold the satisfaction that I shall have in receiving. It is necessary however that I should let
you

you a little into the state of my finances, that you may not suppose them more narrowly circumscribed than they are. Since Mrs. Unwin and I have lived at Olney, we have had but one purse; although during the whole of that time, till lately, her income was nearly double mine. Her revenues indeed are now in some measure reduced, and do not much exceed my own; the worst consequence of this is, that we are forced to deny ourselves some things which hitherto we have been better able to afford, but they are such things as neither life, nor the well-being of life depend upon. My own income has been better than it is, but when it was best, it would not have enabled me to live as my connexions demanded that I should, had it not been combined with a better than itself, at least at this end of the kingdom. Of this I had full proof during three months that I spent in lodgings at Huntingdon, in which time by the help of good management, and a clear notion of œconomical matters, I contrived to spend the income of a twelve-month. Now, my beloved Cousin, you are in possession of the whole case as it stands. Strain no points to your own inconvenience, or hurt, for there is no need of it; but indulge yourself in communicating (no matter what) that you can spare without missing it, since by so doing you will be sure to add to the comforts of my life, one of the sweetest that I can enjoy, a token and proof of your affection.

In the affair of my next publication, toward which you also offer me so kindly your assistance, there will be no need that you should

should help me in the manner that you propose. It will be a large work, consisting I should imagine, of six volumes at least. The 12th of this month I shall have spent a year upon it, and it will cost me more than another. I do not love the Booksellers well enough to make them a present of such a labour, but intend to publish by subscription. Your vote and interest, my dear Cousin, upon the occasion, if you please, but nothing more! I will trouble you with some papers of Proposals, when the time shall come, and am sure that you will circulate as many for me as you can. Now my dear I am going to tell you a secret. It is a great secret, that you must not whisper even to your Cat. No creature is at this moment apprized of it, but Mrs. Unwin, and her Son. I am making a new translation of Homer, and am upon the point of finishing the twenty-first book of the Iliad. The reasons upon which I undertake this Herculean labour, and by which I justify an enterprize in which I seem so effectually anticipated by Pope, although in fact he has not anticipated me at all, I may possibly give you, if you wish for them, when I can find nothing more interesting to say. A period which I do not conceive to be very near! I have not answered many things in your Letter, nor can do it at present for want of room. I cannot believe but that I should know you, notwithstanding all that time may have done. There is not a feature of your face, could I meet it upon the road by itself, that I should not instantly recollect. I should say, that is my Cousin's nose, or
those

those are her lips and her chin, and no woman upon earth can claim them but herself. As for me, I am a very smart youth of my years. I am not indeed grown grey so much as I am grown bald. No matter. There was more hair in the world than ever had the honour to belong to me. Accordingly having found just enough to curl a little at my ears, and to intermix with a little of my own that still hangs behind, I appear, if you see me in an afternoon, to have a very decent head-dress, not easily distinguished from my natural growth; which being worn with a small bag, and a black riband about my neck, continues to me the charms of my youth, even on the verge of age. Away with the fear of writing too often.

Yours, my dearest Cousin,

W. C.

P. S.—That the view I give you of myself may be complete, I add the two following items—That I am in debt to nobody, and that I grow fat.

LETTER XLII.

To Lady HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I am glad that I always loved you as I did. It releases me from any occasion to suspect that my present affection for you is indebted for its existence to any selfish considerations.

ations. No. I am sure I love you disinterestedly, and for your own sake, because I never thought of you with any other sensations than those of the truest affection, even while I was under the influence of a persuasion, that I should never hear from you again. But with my present feelings, superadded to those that I always had for you, I find it no easy matter to do justice to my sensations. I perceive myself in a state of mind similar to that of the Traveller, described in Pope's Messiah, who, as he passes through a sandy desert, starts at the sudden and unexpected sound of a waterfall. You have placed me in a situation new to me, and in which I feel myself somewhat puzzled how I ought to behave. At the same time that I would not grieve you by putting a check upon your bounty, I would be as careful not to abuse it, as if I were a miser, and the question not about your money, but my own.

Although I do not suspect that a secret to you, my Cousin, is any burthen, yet having maturely considered that point since I wrote my last, I feel myself altogether disposed to release you from the injunction to that effect under which I laid you. I have now made such a progress in my Translation, that I need neither fear that I shall stop short of the end, nor that any other rider of Pegasus should overtake me. Therefore if at any time it should fall fairly in your way, or you should feel yourself invited to say that

I am so occupied, you have my Poetship's free permission. Dr. Johnson read and recommended my first volume.

W. C.

BETTER XLIIIF.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Dec. 24, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

'Till I had made such a progress in my present undertaking, as to put it out of all doubt, that, if I lived, I should proceed in and finish it, I kept the matter to myself. It would have done me little honour to have told my friends, that I had an arduous enterprize in hand, if afterwards I must have told them, that I had dropped it. Knowing it to have been universally the opinion of the Literati, ever since they have allowed themselves to consider the matter coolly, that a Translation, properly so called, of Homer, is, notwithstanding what Pope has done, a desideratum in the English language, it struck me that an attempt to supply the deficiency would be an honourable one; and having made myself in former years somewhat critically a master of the original, I was by this double consideration induced to make the attempt myself. I am now translating into blank-verse the last book of the Iliad, and mean to publish by subscription.

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER XLIV.

To Lady HESKETH.

Jan. 10, 1786.

It gave me great pleasure that you found my friend Unwin, what I was sure you would find him, a most agreeable man. I did not usher him in with the marrow-bones and cleavers of high-sounding panegyric, both because I was certain that whatsoever merit he had, your discernment would mark it, and because it is possible to do a man material injury, by making his praise his harbinger. It is easy to raise expectation to such a pitch, that the reality, be it ever so excellent, must necessarily fall below it.

I hold myself much indebted to Mr. ———, of whom I have the first information from yourself, both for his friendly dispositions towards me, and for the manner in which he marks the defects in my Volume. An author must be tender indeed to wince on being touched so gently. It is undoubtedly as he says, and as you, and my Uncle say, you cannot be all mistaken, neither is it at all probable that any of you should be so. I take it for granted therefore, that there are inequalities in the composition, and I do assure you, my dear, most faithfully, that if it should reach a second edition, I will spare no pains to improve it. It may serve me for an agreeable amusement perhaps, when Homer shall be gone and done with. The first edition of poems has generally been susceptible of improvement. Pope, I believe, never published one in

his life that did not undergo variations, and his longest pieces many. I will only observe, that inequalities there must be always, and in every work of length. There are level parts of every subject, parts which we cannot with propriety attempt to elevate. They are by nature humble, and can only be made to assume an awkward and uncouth appearance by being mounted. But again I take it for granted, that this remark does not apply to the matter of your objection. You were sufficiently aware of it before, and have no need, that I should suggest it as an apology, could it have served that office, but would have made it for me yourself. In truth, my dear, had you known in what anguish of mind I wrote the whole of that Poem, and under what perpetual interruptions from a cause that has since been removed, so that sometimes I had not an opportunity of writing more than three lines at a sitting, you would long since have wondered as much as I do myself, that it turned out any thing better than Grub-street.

My Cousin, give yourself no trouble to find out any of the Magi to scrutinize my Homer. I can do without them; and if I were not conscious that I have no need of their help, I would be the first to call for it. Assure yourself that I intend to be careful to the utmost line of all possible caution, both with respect to language and versification. I will not send a verse to the Press that shall not have undergone the strictest examination.

A subscription is surely on every account the most eligible mode of publication. When I shall have emptied the purses of my friends, and of their friends, into my own, I am still free to levy contributions upon the world at large, and I shall then have a fund to defray the expences of a new edition. I have ordered Johnson to print the Proposals immediately, and hope that they will kiss your hands before the week is expired.

I have had the kindest Letter from Josephus that I ever had. He mentioned my purpose to one of the Masters of Eton, who replied, that "such a work is much wanted."

W. C.

LETTER XLV.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Jan. 31, 1786.

It is very pleasant, my dearest Cousin, to receive a present so delicately conveyed as that which I received so lately from Anonymous, but it is also very painful to have nobody to thank for it. I find myself therefore driven by stress of necessity to the following resolution, viz. that I will constitute you my Thanks-Receiver-General for whatsoever gift I shall receive hereafter, as well as for those, that I have already received from a nameless benefactor. I therefore thank you, my Cousin, for a most elegant

elegant present, including the most elegant compliment that ever Poet was honoured with; for a snuff-box of tortoise-shell, with a beautiful landscape on the lid of it, glazed with chrystal, having the figures of three Hares in the fore-ground, and inscribed above with these words, *The Peasant's Nest*—and below with these, *Tiney, Puss, and Bess*. For all and every of these I thank you, and also for standing proxy on this occasion. Nor must I forget to thank you, that so soon after I had sent you the first Letter of Anonymous, I received another in the same hand.—There!—Now I am a little easier.

I have almost conceived a design to send up half a dozen stout country-fellows to tie by the leg to their respective bed-posts the company that so abridges your opportunity of writing to me. Your Letters are the joy of my heart, and I cannot endure to be robbed by I know not whom, of half my treasure. But there is no comfort without a drawback, and therefore it is, that I, who have unknown friends, have unknown enemies also. Ever since I wrote last, I find myself in better health, and my nocturnal spasms and fever considerably abated. I intend to write to Dr. Kerr on Thursday, that I may gratify him with an account of my amendment; for to him I know that it will be a gratification. Were he not a Physician, I should regret, that he lives so distant, for he is a most agreeable man, but being what he is, it would be impossible to have his company, even if he were a neighbour, unless in
time

time of sickness, at which time, whatever charms he might have himself, my own must necessarily lose much of their effect on him.

When I write to you, my dear, what I have already related to the General, I am always fearful least I should tell you that for news with which you are well acquainted. For once however I will venture.—On Wednesday last I received from Johnson the ms. copy of a specimen that I had sent to the General, and inclosed in the same cover, Notes upon it by an unknown Critic. Johnson, in a short Letter, recommended him to me as a man of unquestionable learning and ability. On perusal and consideration of his remarks I found him such, and having nothing so much at heart as to give all possible security to yourself and the General that my Work shall not come forth unfinished, I answered Johnson, “ that I would gladly submit my ms. to his friend.” He is, in truth, a very clever fellow, perfectly a stranger to me, and one who I promise you will not spare for severity of animadversion where he shall find occasion. It is impossible for you, my dearest Cousin, to express a wish that I do not equally feel a wish to gratify. You are desirous that Maty should see a book of my Homer, and for that reason if Maty *will* see a book of it he shall be welcome, although time is likely to be precious, and consequently any delay that is not absolutely necessary, as much as possible to be avoided. I am now revising the Iliad ; it is a business that will cost me four months,

months, perhaps five, for I compare the very words as I go, and if much alteration should occur, must transcribe the whole. The first Book I have almost transcribed already. To these five months Johnson says, that nine more must be added for Printing, and upon my own experience I will venture to assure you, that the tardiness of Printers will make those nine months twelve. There is danger therefore that my subscribers may think, that I make them wait too long, and that they who know me not may suspect a bubble. How glad I shall be to read it over in an evening, book by book, as fast as I settle the copy, to you, and to Mrs. Unwin! She has been my touchstone always, and without reference to her taste and judgment I have printed nothing. With one of you at each elbow I should think myself the happiest of all Poets.

The General and I having broken the ice, are upon the most comfortable terms of correspondence.. He writes very affectionately to me, and I say every thing to him that comes uppermost: I could not write frequently to any creature living upon any other terms than those. He tells me of infirmities that he has, which make him less active than he was. I am sorry to hear that he has any such. Alas! Alas! he was young when I saw him only twenty years ago.

I have the most affectionate Letter imaginable from Colman, who writes to me like a brother. The Chancellor is yet dumb.

May

May God have you in his keeping, my beloved Cousin.
Farewell.

W. C.

LETTER XLVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 9, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I have been impatient to tell you that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so completely occupied by this tormenting Specimen, that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a Letter on Monday, that would distress and alarm him; I sent him another yesterday that will, I hope, quiet him again. Johnson has apologized very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures, and his friend has promised to confine himself in future to a comparison of me with the original, so that I doubt not we shall jog on merrily together. And now my dear let me tell you once more that your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both—I shall see you again—I shall hear your voice, we shall take walks together; I will shew you my prospects, the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse, and its banks, every thing that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of

those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn, mention it not for your life. We have never had so many visitors but we could easily accommodate them all, though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son, all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June, because before that time my greenhouse will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats, and there you shall sit with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honeysuckles, roses, and jasmine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention the country will not be in complete beauty. And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my Hares, and in which lodges Puss at present. But he poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand, stands a cupboard, the work of the same Author. It was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table which I also made, but a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament, and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the farther end of this superb vestibule you will find the door of the parlour into which I will
conduct

conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin (unless we should meet her before) and where we will be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my Cousin, to the Swan at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

My dear, I have told Homer what you say about Casks and Urns, and have asked him whether he is sure that it is a Cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He swears that it is a Cask, and that it will never be any thing better than a Cask to Eternity. So if the God is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

Adieu my dearest, dearest Cousin,

W. C.

LETTER XLVII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 11, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

It must be I suppose a fortnight or thereabout, since I wrote last, I feel myself so alert and so ready to write again. Be that as it may, here I come. We talk of nobody but you; what we will do with you when we get you; where you shall walk, where you shall sleep, in short every thing that bears

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the

the remotest relation to your well being at Olney, occupies all our talking time, which is all that I do not spend at Troy.

I have every reason for writing to you as often as I can, but I have a particular reason for doing it now. I want to tell you that by the Diligence on Wednesday next I mean to send you a quire of my Homer for Maty's perusal. It will contain the first book, and as much of the second as brings us to the catalogue of the ships, and is every morsel of the revised copy that I have transcribed. My dearest Cousin, read it yourself—Let the General read it. Do what you please with it so that it reach Johnson in due time, but let Maty be the only *Critic* that has any thing to do with it. The vexation, the perplexity, that attends a multiplicity of criticisms by various hands, many of which are sure to be futile, many of them ill-founded, and some of them contradictory to others, is inconceivable, except by the Author whose ill-fated work happens to be the subject of them. This also appears to me self evident. That if a Work have past under the review of one man of taste and learning, and have had the good fortune to please him, his approbation gives security for that of all others qualified like himself. I speak thus, my dear, after having just escaped from such a storm of trouble, occasioned by endless remarks, hints, suggestions, and objections, as drove me almost to despair, and to the very verge of a resolution to drop my undertaking for ever. With infinite difficulty I at last sifted the chaff from the wheat, availed myself of what
appeared

appeared to me to be just, and rejected the rest, but not till the labour and anxiety had nearly undone all that Kerr had been doing for me. My beloved Cousin, trust me for it, as you safely may, that temper, vanity, and self-importance had nothing to do in all this distress that I suffered. It was merely the effect of an alarm, that I could not help taking, when I compared the great trouble I had with a few lines only, thus handled, with that, which I foresaw such handling of the whole must necessarily give me. I felt before hand that my constitution would not bear it. I shall send up this second specimen, in a box that I have had made on purpose, and when Maty has done with the copy, and you have done with it yourself, then you must return it in said box to my Translatorship.—Though Johnson's friend has teased me sadly, I verily believe that I shall have no more such cause to complain of him. We now understand one another, and I firmly believe that I might have gone the world through before I had found his equal in an accurate and familiar acquaintance with the original.

A Letter to Mr. Urban in the last Gentleman's Magazine, of which I's book is the subject, pleases me more than any thing I have seen in the way of eulogium yet. I have no guess of the author.

I do not wish to remind the Chancellor of his promise. Ask you why, my Cousin? Because I suppose it would be impossible. He has no doubt forgotten it entirely, and would be obliged to
take

take my word for the truth of it, which I could not bear. We drank tea together with Mrs. C—e, and her Sister, in King-Street, Bloomsbury, and there was the promise made.—I said Thurlow—I am nobody, and shall be always nobody, and you will be Chancellor—You shall provide for me when you are. He smiled and replied, I surely will. These ladies, said I, are witnesses. He still smiled, and said, let them be so, for I will certainly do it. But alas! twenty-four years have passed since the day of the date thereof, and to mention it now would be to upbraid him with inattention to his plighted troth. Neither do I suppose he could easily serve such a creature as I am if he would.

Adieu, whom I love intirely.

W. C.

LETTER XLVIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 19, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Since so it must be, so it shall be. If you will not sleep under the roof of a friend, may you never sleep under the roof of an enemy. An enemy however you will not presently find. Mrs. Unwin bids me mention her affectionately, and tell you that she willingly gives up a part for the sake of the rest, willingly at least as far as willingly may consist with some reluctance :

luctance : I feel my reluctance too. Our design was, that you should have slept in the room that serves me for a study, and its having been occupied by you would have been an additional recommendation of it to me. But all reluctances are superseded by the thought of seeing you ; and because we have nothing so much at heart as the wish to see you happy and comfortable, we are desirous therefore to accommodate you to your own mind, and not to ours. Mrs. Unwin has already secured for you an apartment, or rather two, just such as we could wish. The house in which you will find them, is within thirty yards of our own, and opposite to it. The whole affair is thus commodiously adjusted ; and now I have nothing to do but to wish for June, and June, my Cousin, was never so wished for since June was made. I shall have a thousand things to hear, and a thousand to say, and they will all rush into my mind together, till it will be so crowded with things impatient to be said, that for some time I shall say nothing. But no matter—Sooner or later they will all come out ; and since we shall have you the longer for not having you under our own roof, (a circumstance that more than any thing reconciles us to that measure) they will stand the better chance. After so long a separation, a separation that of late seemed likely to last for life, we shall meet each other as alive from the dead, and for my own part I can truly say, that I have not a friend in the other world whose resurrection would give me greater pleasure.

I am

I am truly happy, my dear, in having pleased you with what you have seen of my Homer. I wish that all English readers had your unsophisticated, or rather unadulterated taste, and could relish simplicity like you. But I am well aware that in this respect I am under a disadvantage, and that many, especially many ladies, missing many turns and prettinesses of expression, that they have admired in Pope, will account my Translation in those particulars defective. But I comfort myself with the thought, that in reality it is no defect, on the contrary that the want of all such embellishments as do not belong to the original, will be one of its principal merits with persons indeed capable of relishing Homer. He is the best Poet that ever lived for many reasons, but for none more than for that majestic plainness that distinguishes him from all others. As an accomplished person moves gracefully without thinking of it, in like manner the dignity of Homer seems to cost him no labour. It was natural to him to say great things, and to say them well, and little ornaments were beneath his notice. If Maty, my dearest Cousin, should return to you my copy with any such strictures as may make it necessary for me to see it again before it goes to Johnson, in that case you shall send it to me. Otherwise to Johnson immediately. For he writes me word he wishes his friend to go to work upon it as soon as possible. When you come, my dear, we will hang all these Critics together, for they have worried me without remorse or conscience, at least one of them has : I had actually murdered more than a few of the best lines in the specimen,

men, in compliance with his requisitions, but plucked up my courage at last, and in the very last opportunity that I had, recovered them to life again by restoring the original reading. At the same time I readily confess that the Specimen is the better for all this discipline its Author has undergone, but then it has been more indebted for its improvement to that pointed accuracy of examination, to which I was myself excited, than to any proposed amendments from Mr. Critic; for as sure as you are my Cousin, whom I long to see at Olney, so surely would he have done me irreparable mischief, if I would have given him leave.

My friend Bagot writes to me in a most friendly strain, and calls loudly upon me for original poetry. When I shall have done with Homer probably he will not call in vain; having found the prime feather of a Swan on the banks of the *smug and silver Trent*, he keeps it for me.

Adieu dear Cousin,

W. C.

I am sorry that the General has such indifferent health. He must not die. I can by no means spare a person so kind to me.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, March 6, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Your opinion has more weight with me than that of all the Critics in the world, and to give you a proof of it, I make you a concession that I would hardly have made to them all united. I do not indeed absolutely covenant, promise, and agree, that I will discard *all* my Elisions, but I hereby bind myself to dismiss *as many* of them, as, without sacrificing energy to sound, I can. It is incumbent upon me in the mean time, to say something in justification of the few that I shall retain, that I may not seem a Poet mounted rather on a Mule than on Pegasus. In the first place, *The*, is a barbarism. We are indebted for it to the Celts, or the Goths, or to the Saxons, or perhaps to them all. In the two best languages that ever were spoken, the Greek and the Latin, there is no similar incumbrance of expression to be found. Secondly, The perpetual use of it in our language, is to us miserable Poets, attended with two great inconveniences. Our verse consisting only of ten syllables, it not unfrequently happens, that the fifth part of a line is to be engrossed, and necessarily too, (unless Elision prevents it) by this abominable intruder; and which is worse in my account, open vowels are continually the consequence:—*The* element—*The* air, &c. Thirdly, the French who
are

are equally with the English chargeable with barbarism in this particular, dispose of their *Le* and their *La* without ceremony, and always take care that they shall be absorbed, both in verse and in prose, in the vowel that immediately follows them. Fourthly, and I believe lastly (and for your sake I wish it may prove so) the practice of cutting short a *The*, is warranted by Milton, who of all English Poets that ever lived, had certainly the finest ear. Dr. Warton indeed has dared to say, that he had a bad one, for which he deserves, as far as critical demerit can deserve it, to lose his own, I thought I had done, but there is still a fifthly behind, and it is this. That the custom of abbreviating *The*, belongs to the stile in which, in my advertisement annexed to the specimen, I profess to write. The use of that stile would have warranted me in the practice of much greater liberty of this sort than I ever intended to take. In perfect consistence with that stile I might say, I' th' tempest, I' th' door-way, &c. which however I would not allow myself to do, because I was aware that it would be objected to, and with reason. But it seems to me for the causes above said, that when I shorten *The*, before a vowel, or before *wh*, as in the line you mention,

"Than th' whole broad Hellespont in all his parts,"

my license is not equally exceptionable. Because *W*, though he rank as a consonant in the word *whole*, is not allowed to announce himself to the ear, and *H* is an aspirate. But as I said at the beginning,

so say I still, I am most willing to conform myself to your very sensible observation, that it is necessary, if we would please, to consult the taste of our own day. Neither would I have pelted you, my dearest Cousin, with any part of this volley of good reasons, had I not designed them as an answer to those objections which you say you have heard from others. But I only mention them. Though satisfactory to myself, I wave them, and will allow to *The* his whole dimensions, whensoever it can be done.

Thou only Critic of my verse that is to be found in all the earth whom I love, what shall I say in answer to your own objection to that passage.

*“ Softly he placed his hand
“ On th’ old man’s hand, and push’d it gently away.”*

I can say neither more nor less than this, that when our dear friend the General sent me his opinion on the specimen, quoting those very words from it, he added, “ With this part I was particularly pleased : there is nothing in Poetry more descriptive.” Such were his very words. Taste, my dear, is various, there is nothing so various, and even between persons of the best taste, there are diversities of opinion on the same subject, for which it is not possible to account. So much for these matters.

You advise me to consult the General, and to confide in him, I follow your advice, and have done both. By the last post I
asked

asked his permission to send him the Books of my Homer, as fast as I should finish them off. I shall be glad of his remarks, and more glad than of any thing, to do that which I hope may be agreeable to him. They will of course pass into your hands before they are sent to Johnson. The quire that I sent is now in the hands of Johnson's friend. I intended to have told you in my last, but forgot it, that Johnson behaves very handsomely in the affair of my two Volumes. He acts with a liberality not often found in persons of his occupation, and to mention it when occasion calls me to it, is a justice due to him.

I am very much pleased with Mr. Stanley's Letter—several compliments were paid me on the subject of that first Volume by my own friends, but I do not recollect that I ever knew the opinion of a stranger about it before, whether favorable or otherwise ; I only heard by a side-wind that it was very much read in Scotland, and more than here.

Farewell my dearest Cousin, whom we expect, of whom we talk continually, and whom we continually long for.

W. C.

Your anxious wishes for my success delight me, and you may rest assured, my dear, that I have all the ambition on the subject that you can wish me to feel. I more than admire my Author. I often stand astonished at his beauties. I am for ever amused with the
translation

translation of him, and I have received a thousand encouragements. These are all so many happy omens that, I hope, shall be verified by the event.

LETTER L.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

April 5, 1786.

I did, as you suppose, bestow all possible consideration on the subject of an apology for my Homeric undertaking. I turned the matter about in my mind an hundred different ways, and in every way in which it would present itself, found it an impracticable business. It is impossible for me, with what delicacy so ever I may manage it, to state the objections that lie against Pope's Translation, without incurring odium, and the imputation of arrogance; foreseeing this danger, I choose to say nothing.

W. C.

P. S.—You may well wonder at my courage, who have undertaken a work of such enormous length. You would wonder more if you knew that I translated the whole Iliad with no other help than a Clavis. But I have since equipped myself better for this immense journey, and am revising the Work in company with a good Commentator.

LETTER

LETTER LI.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, April 17, 1786.

If you will not quote Solomon, my dearest Cousin, I will. He says, and as beautifully as truly—"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life!" I feel how much reason he had on his side when he made this observation, and am myself sick of your fortnight's delay.

* * * * *

The Vicarage was built by Lord Dartmouth, and was not finished till some time after we arrived at Olney, consequently it is new. It is a smart stone building well sashed, by much too good for the Living, but just what I would wish for you. It has, as you justly concluded from my premises, a garden, but rather calculated for use than ornament. It is square, and well walled, but has neither harbour nor alcove, nor other shade, except the shadow of the house. But we have two gardens, which are yours. Between your mansion and ours is interposed nothing but an orchard, into which a door opening out of our garden, affords us the easiest communication imaginable, will save the round about by the town, and

and make both houses one. Your chamber-windows look over the river; and over the meadows, to a village called Emberton, and command the whole length of a long bridge, described by a certain Poet, together with a view of the road at a distance. Should you wish for Books at Olney, you must bring them with you, or you will wish in vain, for I have none but the works of a certain Poet, Cowper, of whom perhaps you have heard, and they are as yet but two volumes. They may multiply hereafter, but at present they are no more.

You are the first person for whom I have heard Mrs. Unwin express such feelings as she does for you. She is not profuse in professions, nor forward to enter into treaties of friendship with new faces, but when her friendship is once engaged, it may be confided in even unto death. She loves you already, and how much more will she love you before this time twelve-month! I have indeed endeavoured to describe you to her, but perfectly as I have you by heart, I am sensible that my picture cannot do you justice: I never saw one that did. Be you what you may, you are much beloved, and will be so at Olney, and Mrs. U. expects you with the pleasure that one feels at the return of a long absent, dear relation; that is to say, with a pleasure such as mine. She sends you her warmest affections.

On Friday I received a Letter from dear Anonymous, ap-
prising

prising me of a parcel that the coach would bring me on Saturday. Who is there in the world that has, or thinks he has, reason to love me to the degree that he does? But it is no matter. He chooses to be unknown, and his choice is and ever shall be so sacred to me, that if his name lay on the table before me reversed, I would not turn the paper about that I might read it. Much as it would gratify me to thank him, I would turn my eyes away from the forbidden discovery. I long to assure him that those same eyes, concerning which he expresses such kind apprehensions lest they should suffer by this laborious undertaking, are as well as I could expect them to be, if I were never to touch either book or pen. Subject to weakness, and occasional slight inflammations, it is probable that they will always be, but I cannot remember the time when they enjoyed any thing so like an exemption from those infirmities as at present. One would almost suppose, that reading Homer were the best Ophthalmic in the world. I should be happy to remove his solicitude on the subject, but it is a pleasure that he will not let me enjoy. Well then, I will be content without it; and so content, that though I believe you, my dear, to be in full possession of all this mystery, you shall never know me while you live, either directly, or by hints of any sort, attempt to extort, or to steal the secret from you. I should think myself as justly punishable as the Bethshemites, for looking into the Ark which they were not allowed to touch.

I have not sent for Kerr, for Kerr can do nothing but send me to Bath, and to Bath I cannot go for a thousand reasons. The summer will set me up again; I grow fat every day, and shall be as big as Gog or Magog, or both put together, before you come.

I did actually live three years with Mr. Chapman, a Solicitor, that is to say, I slept three years in his house, but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days in Southampton-Row, as you very well remember. There was I, and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly employed from morning to night in giggling, and making giggle, instead of studying the Law. Oh fie, Cousin! how could you do so? I am pleased with Lord Thurlow's inquiries about me. If he takes it into that inimitable head of his, he may make a man of me yet. I could love him heartily, if he would but deserve it at my hands. That I did so once is certain: The Duchess of —, who in the world set her agoing? But if all the Duchesses in the world were spinning like so many whirligigs for my benefit, I would not stop them. It is a noble thing to be a Poet, it makes all the world so lively. I might have preached more Sermons than even Tillotson did, and better, and the world would have been still fast asleep, but a volume of verse is a fiddle that puts the universe in motion.

W. C.



LETTER

LETTER LII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, April 24, 1786.

Your Letters are so much my comfort that I often tremble lest by any accident I should be disappointed; and the more because you have been, more than once, so engaged in company on the writing day, that I have had a narrow escape. Let me give you a piece of good counsel, my Cousin: Follow my laudable example, write when you can, take Time's forelock in one hand, and a pen in the other, and so make sure of your opportunity. It is well for me that you write faster than any body, and more in an hour than other people in two, else I know not what would become of me. When I read your Letters I hear you talk, and I love talking Letters dearly, especially from you. Well, the middle of June will not be always a thousand years off, and when it comes I shall hear you, and see you too, and shall not care a farthing then if you do not touch a pen in a month. By the way you must either send me or bring me some more paper, for before the Moon shall have performed a few more revolutions, I shall not have a scrap left, and tedious revolutions they are just now, that is certain.

I give you leave to be as peremptory as you please, especially at a distance; but when you say that you are a Cowper, (and the

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better

better it is for the Cowpers that such you are, and I give them joy of you with all my heart) you must not forget, that I boast myself a Cowper too, and have my humours, and fancies, and purposes, and determinations, as well as others of my name, and hold them as fast as they can. *You* indeed tell *me* how often I shall see you when you come. A pretty story truly. I am a *He* Cowper, my dear, and claim the privileges that belong to my noble sex. But these matters shall be settled, as my Cousin Agamemnon used to say, at a more convenient time.

I shall rejoice to see the Letter you promise me, for though I met with a morsel of praise last week, I do not know that the week current is likely to produce me any, and having lately been pretty much pampered with that diet, I expect to find myself rather hungry by the time when your next Letter shall arrive. It will therefore be very opportune. The morsel above alluded to, came from—whom do you think? From —, but she desires that her authorship may be a secret. And in my answer I promised not to divulge it, except to you. It is a pretty copy of verses, neatly written, and well turned, and when you come, you shall see them. I intend to keep all pretty things to myself till then, that they may serve me as a bait to lure you hither more effectually. The last Letter that I had from —, I received so many years since, that it seems as if it had reached me a good while before I was born.

I was

I was grieved at the heart that the General could not come, and that illness was in part the cause that hindered him. I have sent him by his express desire, a new edition of the first book, and half the second. He would not suffer me to send it to you, my dear, lest you should post it away to Maty at once. He did not give that reason, but being shrewd, I found it,

The grass begins to grow, and the leaves to bud, and every thing is preparing to be beautiful against you come. Adieu.

W. C.

You enquire of our walks, I perceive, as well as our rides. They are beautiful. You enquire also concerning a cellar. You have two cellars. Oh! what years have passed since we took the same walks, and drank out of the same bottle! but a few more weeks and then!

LETTER LIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, May 8, 1786.

I did not at all doubt that your tenderness for my feelings had inclined you to suppress in your Letters to me the intelligence concerning Maty's critique, that yet reached me from another quarter. When I wrote to you I had
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not learned it from the General, but from my friend Bull, who only knew it by hear-say. The next post brought me the news of it from the first-mentioned, and the critique itself inclosed. Together with it came also a squib discharged against me in the Public Advertiser. The General's Letter found me in one of my most melancholy moods, and my spirits did not rise on the receipt of it. The Letter indeed that he had cut from the news-paper gave me little pain, both because it contained nothing formidable, though written with malevolence enough, and because a nameless author can have no more weight with his readers than the reason which he has on his side, can give him. But Maty's animadversions hurt me more. In part they appeared to me unjust, and in part ill-natured, and yet the man himself being an oracle in every body's account, I apprehended that he had done me much mischief. Why he says that the Translation is far from exact, is best known to himself. For I know it to be as exact as is compatible with poetry ; and prose translations of Homer are not wanted ; the world has one already. But I will not fill my Letter to you with hypercriticisms, I will only add an extract from a Letter of Colman's, that I received last Friday, and will then dismiss the subject. It came accompanied by a copy of the Specimen, which he himself had amended, and with so much taste and candour that it charmed me. He says as follows :

“ One

“ One copy I have returned, with some remarks prompted
“ by my zeal for your success, not, Heaven knows, by arrogance
“ or impertinence. I know no other way at once so plain, and so
“ short, of delivering my thoughts on the specimen of your Trans-
“ lation, which on the whole I admire exceedingly, thinking it
“ breathes the spirit, and conveys the manner of the original;
“ though having here neither Homer, nor Pope’s Homer, I cannot
“ speak precisely of particular lines or expressions, or compare
“ your blank-verse with his rhyme, except by declaring that I
“ think blank-verse infinitely more congenial to the magnificent
“ simplicity of Homer’s hexameters, than the confined couplets,
“ and the jingle of rhyme.”

His amendments are chiefly bestowed on the lines encumbered with Elisions, and I will just take this opportunity to tell you, my dear, because I know you to be as much interested in what I write as myself, that some of the most offensive of those Elisions were occasioned by mere criticism. I was fairly hunted into them by vexatious objections made without end by ——— and his friend, and altered, and altered, till at last I did not care how I altered. Many thanks for ———’s verses, which deserve just the character you give of them. They are neat and easy—but I would mumble her well if I could get at her, for allowing herself to suppose for a moment that I praised the Chancellor with a view to emolument. I wrote those Stanzas merely for my own amusement, and they slept
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in a dark closet years after I composed them; not in the least designed for publication. But when Johnson had printed off the longer pieces of which the first volume principally consists, he wrote me word that he wanted yet two thousand lines to swell it to a proper size. On that occasion it was that I collected every scrap of verse that I could find, and that among the rest. None of the smaller poems had been introduced, or had been published at all with my name, but for this necessity.

Just as I wrote the last word I was called down to Dr. Kerr, who came to pay me a voluntary visit. Were I sick, his cheerful and friendly manner would almost restore me. Air and exercise are his theme; them he recommends as the best physic for me, and in all weathers. Come, therefore, my dear, and take a little of this good physic with me, for you will find it beneficial as well as I; come and assist Mrs. Unwin in the re-establishment of your Cousin's health. Air and exercise, and she and you together, will make me a perfect Samson. You will have a good house over your head, comfortable apartments, obliging neighbours, good roads, a pleasant country, and in us your constant companions, two who will love you, and do already love you dearly, and with all our hearts. If you are in any danger of trouble it is from myself, if my fits of dejection seize me; and as often as they do, you will be grieved for me; but perhaps by your assistance I shall be able to resist them better. If there is a creature under Heaven, from whose co-operations,

tions, with Mrs. Unwin, I can reasonably expect such a blessing, that creature is yourself. I was not without such attacks when I lived in London, though at that time they were less oppressive, but in your company I was never unhappy a whole day in all my life.

Of how much importance is an Author to himself. I return to that abominable Specimen again, just to notice Maty's impatient censure of the repetition that you mention. I mean of the word *Hand*. In the original there is not a repetition of it. But to repeat a word in that manner, and on such an occasion, is by no means what he calls it, a *modern* invention. In Homer I could shew him many such, and in Virgil they abound. Colman, who in his judgment of classical matters, is inferior to none, says, "*I know not why Maty objects to this expression.*" I could easily change it, but the case standing thus, I know not whether my proud stomach will condescend so low. I rather feel myself disinclined to it.

One evening last week, Mrs. Unwin and I took our walk to Weston, and as we were returning through the grove, opposite the house, the Throckmortons presented themselves at the door. They are owners of a house at Weston, at present empty. It is a very good one, infinitely superior to ours. When we drank Chocolate with them, they both expressed their ardent desire that we would take it, wishing to have us for nearer neighbours. If you, my

Cousin, were not so well provided for as you are, and at our very elbow, I verily believe I should have mustered all my rhetoric to recommend it to you. You might have it for ever without danger of ejectment, whereas your possession of the Vicarage depends on the life of the Vicar who is eighty-six. The environs are most beautiful, and the village itself one of the prettiest I ever saw. Add to this, you would step immediately into Mr. Throckmorton's pleasure-ground, where you would not soil your slipper even in winter. A most unfortunate mistake was made by that gentleman's bailiff in his absence. Just before he left Weston last year, for the winter, he gave him orders to cut short the tops of the flowering shrubs, that lined a serpentine walk in a delightful grove, celebrated by my Poetship, in a little piece that you remember was called the "Shrubbery." The dunce misapprehending the order, cut down and faggotted up the whole grove, leaving neither tree, bush, nor twig; nothing but stumps about as high as my ankle. Mrs. T. told us that she never saw her husband so angry in his life. I judge indeed by his physiognomy, which has great sweetness in it, that he is very little addicted to that infernal passion, but had he cudgelled the man for his cruel blunder, and the havoc made in consequence of it, I could have excused him.

I felt myself really concerned for the Chancellor's illness, and from what I learned of it both from the papers, and from General Cowper, concluded that he must die. I am accordingly delighted
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in the same proportion with the news of his recovery. May he live, and live to be still the support of Government. If it shall be his good pleasure to render me personally any material service, I have no objection to it, but Heaven knows that it is impossible for any living wight to bestow less thought on that subject than myself.

May God be ever with you, my beloved Cousin.

W. C.



LETTER LIV.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, May 15, 1786.

From this very morning I begin to date the last month of our long separation, and confidently, and most comfortably hope, that before the 15th of June shall present itself, we shall have seen each other. Is it not so? And will it not be one of the most extraordinary æras of my extraordinary life? A year ago, we neither corresponded nor expected to meet in this world. But this world is a scene of marvellous events, many of them more marvellous than fiction itself would dare to hazard, and blessed be God! they are not all of the distressing kind; now and then in the course of an existence, whose hue is for the most part sable, a day turns up that makes amends for many sighs, and many

subjects of complaint. Such a day shall I account the day of your arrival at Olney.

Wherefore is it, canst thou tell me, that together with all those delightful sensations, to which the sight of a long absent dear friend gives birth, there is a mixture of something painful? Flutterings, and tumults, and I know not what accompaniments of our pleasure, that are in fact perfectly foreign from the occasion? Such I feel when I think of our meeting, and such, I suppose, feel you, and the nearer the crisis approaches, the more I am sensible of them. I know, beforehand, that they will encrease with every turn of the wheels, that shall convey me to Newport, when I shall set out to meet you, and that when we actually meet, the pleasure, and this unaccountable pain together, will be as much as I shall be able to support. I am utterly at a loss for the cause, and can only resolve it into that appointment, by which it has been fore-ordained that all human delights shall be qualified and mingled with their contraries. For there is nothing formidable in you, to me, at least, there is nothing such. No, not even in your menaces, unless when you threaten me to write no more. Nay, I verily believe, did I not know you to be what you are, and had less affection for you than I have, I should have fewer of these emotions, of which I would have none if I could help it. But a fig for them all! Let us resolve to combat with, and to conquer them. They are dreams, they are illusions of the judgment, some enemy that hates the happiness

piness of human kind, and is ever industrious to dash it, works them in us, and their being so perfectly unreasonable as they are, is a proof of it. Nothing that is such can be the work of a good agent. This I know too by experience, that like all other illusions, they exist only by force of imagination, are indebted for their prevalence to the absence of their object, and in a few moments after its appearance, cease. So then this is a settled point, and the case stands thus. You will tremble as you draw near to Newport, and so shall I. But we will both recollect, that there is no reason why we should, and this recollection will at least have some little effect in our favour. We will likewise both take the comfort of what we know to be true, that the tumult will soon cease, and the pleasure long survive the pain, even as long, I trust, as we ourselves shall survive it.

What you say of Maty gives me all the consolation that you intended. We both think it highly probable that you suggest the true cause of his displeasure, when you suppose him mortified at not having had a part of the Translation laid before him, ere the Specimen was published. The General was very much hurt, and calls his censure harsh and unreasonable. He likewise sent me a consolatory Letter on the occasion, in which he took the kindest pains to heal the wound that he supposed I might have suffered. I am not naturally insensible, and the sensibilities that I had by nature, have been wonderfully enhanced by a long series of shocks,
given

given to a frame of nerves that was never very athletic. I feel accordingly, whether painful or pleasant, in the extreme. Am easily elevated, and easily cast down. The frown of a Critic freezes my poetical powers, and discourages me to a degree that makes me ashamed of my own weakness. Yet I presently recover my confidence again : The half of what you so kindly say in your last, would at any time restore my spirits, and being said by you is infallible. I am not ashamed to confess, that having commenced an Author, I am most abundantly desirous to succeed as such. *I have (what perhaps you little suspect me of) in my nature—an infinite share of ambition.* But with it, I have at the same time, as you well know, an equal share of diffidence. To this combination of opposite qualities it has been owing, that till lately, I stole through life without undertaking any thing, yet always wishing to distinguish myself. At last I ventured, ventured too in the only path that, at so late a period, was yet open to me, and am determined, if God have not determined otherwise, to work my way through the obscurity that has been so long my portion, into notice. Every thing, therefore, that seems to threaten this, my favourite purpose, with disappointment, affects me nearly. I suppose that all ambitious minds are in the same predicament. He who seeks distinction must be sensible of disapprobation exactly in the same proportion as he desires applause. And now, my precious Cousin, I have unfolded my heart to you in this particular, without a speck of dissimulation. Some people, and good people too, would blame me, but you will
not,

not, and they I think would blame without just cause. We certainly do not honour God when we bury, or when we neglect to improve as far as we may, whatever talent he may have bestowed on us, whether it be little or much. In natural things, as well as in spiritual, it is a never-failing truth, that to him who *hath*, that is to him who occupies what he hath diligently, and so as to increase it, more shall be given. Set me down therefore, my dear, for an industrious Rhymer, so long as I shall have the ability, for in this only way is it possible for me, so far as I can see, either to honour God, or to serve man, or even to serve myself.

I rejoice to hear that Mr. Throckmorton wishes to be on a more intimate footing. I am shy, and suspect that he is not very much otherwise, and the consequence has been, that we have mutually wished an acquaintance without being able to accomplish it. Blessings on you for the hint that you dropt on the subject of the house at Weston, for the burthen of my song is, since we have met once again, let us never be separated, as we have been, more.

W. C.

LETTER LV.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, May 25, 1786.

I have at length, my Cousin, found my way into my summer abode. I believe that I described it to you
some

some time since, and will therefore now leave it undescribed. I will only say that I am writing in a band-box, situated, at least in my account, delightfully, because it has a window in one side that opens into that orchard, through which as I am sitting here, I shall see you often pass, and which, therefore, I already prefer to all the orchards in the world. You do well to prepare me for all possible delays, because in this life all sorts of disappointments are possible, and I shall do well, if any such delay of your journey should happen, to practice that lesson of patience which you inculcate. But it is a lesson, which even with you for my teacher, I shall be slow to learn. Being sure however that you will not procrastinate without cause, I will make my self as easy as I can about it, and hope the best. To convince you how much I am under discipline, and good advice, I will lay aside a favourite measure, influenced in doing so by nothing but the good sense of your contrary opinion. I had set my heart on meeting you at Newport. In my haste to see you once again, I was willing to overlook many awkwardnesses, I could not but foresee would attend it. I put them aside so long as I only foresaw them myself, but since I find that you foresee them too, I can no longer deal so slightly with them. It is therefore determined that we meet at Olney. Much I shall feel, but I will not die if I can help it, and I beg that you will take all possible care to outlive it likewise, for I know what it is to be balked in the moment of acquisition, and should be loth to know it again.

Last

Last Monday in the evening, we walked to Weston, according to our usual custom. It happened, owing to a mistake of time, that we set out half an hour sooner than usual. This mistake we discovered while we were in the wilderness, so, finding that we had time before us, as they say, Mrs. Unwin proposed that we should go into the village, and take a view of the house that I had just mentioned to you. We did so, and found it such a one as in most respects would suit you well. But Moses Brown, our Vicar, who, as I told you, is in his eighty-sixth year, is not bound to die for that reason. He said himself, when he was here last summer, that he should live ten years longer, and for ought that appears, so he may. In which case, for the sake of its near neighbourhood to us, the Vicarage has charms for me, that no other place can rival. But this, and a thousand things more, shall be talked over when you come.

We have been industriously cultivating our acquaintance with our Weston neighbours, since I wrote last, and they on their part have been equally diligent in the same cause. I have a notion that we shall all suit well. I see much in them both that I admire. You know perhaps that they are Catholics.

It is a delightful bundle of praise, my Cousin, that you have sent me. All jasmine and lavender. Whoever the Lady is, she has evidently an admirable pen, and a cultivated mind. If a per-

son reads, it is no matter in what language, and if the mind be informed, it is no matter whether that mind belongs to a man or a woman. The taste and the judgment will receive the benefit alike in both.—Long before the Task was published, I made an experiment one day, being in a frolicsome mood, upon my friend :—We were walking in the garden, and conversing on a subject similar to these lines :—

*The few that pray at all, pray oft' amiss,
And seeking grace t'improve the present good,
Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.*

I repeated them, and said to him with an air of *non-chalance*, “Do you recollect those lines? I have seen them somewhere, where are they?” He put on a considering face, and after some deliberation replied—“Oh, I will tell you where they must be—in the Night-Thoughts.” I was glad my trial turned out so well, and did not undeceive him. I mention this occurrence only in confirmation of the letter-writer’s opinion; but at the same time I do assure you, on the faith of an honest man, that I never in my life designed an imitation of Young, or of any other writer; for mimicry is my abhorrence, at least in poetry.

Assure yourself, my dearest Cousin, that both for your sake, since you make a point of it, and for my own, I will be as philosophically careful as possible that these fine nerves of mine shall not
be

be beyond measure agitated, when you arrive. In truth, there is much greater probability that they will be benefitted, and greatly too. Joy of heart, from whatever occasion it may arise, is the best of all nervous medicines, and I should not wonder if such a turn given to my spirits, should have even a lasting effect, of the most advantageous kind, upon them. You must not imagine, neither, that I am on the whole in any great degree subject to nervous affections, occasionally I am, and have been these many years, much liable to dejection. But at intervals, and sometimes for an interval of weeks, no creature would suspect it. For I have not that which commonly is a symptom of such a case, belonging to me: I mean extraordinary elevation in the absence of Mr. Blue-Devil. When I am in the best health, my tide of animal sprightliness flows with great equality, so that I am never, at any time, exalted in proportion as I am sometimes depressed. My depression has a cause, and if that cause were to cease, I should be as cheerful thenceforth, and perhaps for ever, as any man need be. But as I have often said, Mrs. Unwin shall be my expositor.

Adieu, my beloved Cousin. God grant that our friendship, which while we could see each other, never suffered a moment's interruption, and which so long a separation has not in the least abated, may glow in us to our last hour, and be renewed in a better world, there to be perpetuated for ever.

For you must know that I should not love you half so well, if I did not believe you would be my friend to Eternity. There is not room enough for friendship to unfold itself in full bloom, in such a nook of life as this. Therefore I am, and must, and will be,

Yours for' ever,

W, C.

LETTER LVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, May 29, 1786.

Thou dear, comfortable Cousin, whose Letters among all that I receive, have this property peculiarly their own, that I expect them without trembling, and never find any thing in them that does not give me pleasure ! for which, therefore, I would take nothing in exchange that the world could give me, save, and except that, for which I must exchange them soon, (and happy shall I be to do so) your own company. That, indeed, is delayed a little too long, to my impatience at least it seems so, who find the spring backward as it is, too forward because many of its beauties will have faded before you will have an opportunity to see them. We took our customary walk yesterday in the wilderness at Weston, and saw with regret, the laburnums, syringas, and guelder-roses, some of them blown, and others just upon the point
of

of blowing, and could not help observing—all these will be gone before Lady Hesketh comes. Still, however, there will be roses and jasmine, and honey-suckle, and shady walks, and cool alcoves, and you will partake them with us. But I want you to have a share of every thing that is delightful here, and cannot bear that the advance of the season should steal away a single pleasure before you can come to enjoy it.

Every day I think of you, and almost all the day long ; I will venture to say, that even *you* were never so expected in your life. I called last week at the Quaker's to see the furniture of your bed, the fame of which had reached me. It is, I assure you, superb, of printed cotton, and the subject classical. Every morning you will open your eyes on Phaeton kneeling to Apollo, and imploring his father to grant him the conduct of his chariot for a day. May your sleep be as sound, as your bed will be sumptuous, and your nights, at least, will be well provided for.

I shall send up the sixth and seventh books of the Iliad shortly, and shall address them to you. You will forward them to the General. I long to shew you my workshop, and to see you sitting on the opposite side of my table. We shall be as close packed as two wax figures in an old fashioned picture frame. I am writing in it now. It is the place in which I fabricate all my verse in summer time. I rose an hour sooner than usual this morning, that I
might

might finish my sheet before breakfast, for I must write this day to the General.

The grass under my windows is all bespangled with dew-drops, and the birds are singing in the apple-trees among the blossoms. Never Poet had a more commodious oratory in which to invoke his Muse.

I have made your heart ache too often, my poor dear Cousin, with talking about my fits of dejection. Something has happened that has led me to the subject, -or I would have mentioned them more sparingly. Do not suppose, or suspect, that I treat you with reserve, there is nothing in which I am concerned that you shall not be made acquainted with. But the tale is too long for a letter. I will only add for your present satisfaction, that the cause is not exterior, that it is not within the reach of human aid, and that yet I have a hope myself, and Mrs. Unwin a strong persuasion, of its removal. I am indeed even now, and have been for a considerable time, sensible of a change for the better, and expect, with good reason, a comfortable lift from you. Guess then, my beloved Cousin, with what wishes I look forward to the time of your arrival, from whose coming I promise myself, not only pleasure, but peace of mind, at least an additional share of it. At present it is an uncertain and transient guest with me, but the joy with which I shall

shall see and converse with you at Olney, may, perhaps, make it an abiding one.

W. C.

LETTER LVII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, June 4 and 5, 1786.

Ah! my Cousin, you begin already to fear and quake. What a hero am I, compared with you. I have no fears of *you*. On the contrary, am as bold as a lion. I wish that your carriage were even now at the door. You should soon see with how much courage I would face you. But what cause have you for fear? Am I not your Cousin, with whom you have wandered in the fields of Freemantle, and at Bevis's Mount? Who used to read to you, to laugh with you, till our sides have ached, at anything, or nothing? And am I in these respects at all altered? You will not find me so, but just as ready to laugh and to wander as you ever knew me. A cloud perhaps may come over me now and then, for a few hours, but from clouds I was never exempted. And are not you the identical Cousin with whom I have performed all these feats? The very Harriet whom I saw, for the first time, at De Grey's in Norfolk-Street? (it was on a Sunday, when you came with my Uncle and Aunt to drink tea there, and I had dined there,

there, and was just going back to Westminster.) If these things are so, and I am sure that you cannot gainsay a syllable of them all, then this consequence follows; that I do not promise myself more pleasure from your company than I shall be sure to find. Then you are my Cousin, in whom I always delighted, and in whom I doubt not that I shall delight, even to my latest hour. But this wicked coach-maker has sunk my spirits. What a miserable thing it is to depend, in any degree for the accomplishment of a wish, and that wish so fervent, on the punctuality of a creature, who I suppose was never punctual in his life! Do tell him, my dear, in order to quicken him, that if he performs his promise, he shall make my coach when I want one, and that if he performs it not, I will most assuredly employ some other man.

The Throckmortons sent a note to invite us to dinner—we went, and a very agreeable day we had. They made no fuss with us, which I was heartily glad to see, for where I give trouble I am sure that I cannot be welcome. Themselves, and their Chaplain, and we, were all the party. After dinner we had much cheerful and pleasant talk, the particulars of which might not perhaps be so entertaining upon paper, therefore, all but one, I will omit, and that I will mention only because it will of itself be sufficient to give you an insight into their opinion on a very important subject—their own religion. I happened to say, that in all professions and trades, mankind affected an air of mystery. Physicians, I observed, in particular,

cular, were objects of that remark, who persist in prescribing in Latin, many times no doubt to the hazard of a patient's life, through the ignorance of an Apothecary. Mr. Throckmorton assented to what I said, and turning to his Chaplain, to my infinite surprize, observed to him, "*That is just as absurd as our praying in Latin.*" I could have hugged him for his liberality, and freedom from bigotry, but thought it rather more decent to let the matter pass without any visible notice. I therefore heard it with pleasure, and kept my pleasure to myself. The two ladies in the mean time were tête-a-tête in the drawing-room. Their conversation turned principally (as I afterwards learned from Mrs. Unwin) on a most delightful topic, viz. myself. In the first place, Mrs. Throckmorton admired my book, from which she quoted by heart more than I could repeat, though I so lately wrote it. In short, my dear, I cannot proceed to relate what she said of the book, and the book's Author, for that abominable modesty that I cannot even yet get rid of. Let it suffice to say, that you, who are disposed to love every body, who speaks kindly of your Cousin, will certainly love Mrs. Throckmorton, when you shall be told what she said of him, and that you *will* be told is equally certain, because it depends on Mrs. Unwin. It is a very convenient thing to have a Mrs. Unwin, who will tell you many a good and long story for me, that I am not able to tell for myself. I am however not at all in arrears to our neighbours in the matter of admiration and esteem, but the more I know, the more I like them, and have nearly an affection for them

both. I am delighted that the Task has so large a share of the approbation of your sensible Suffolk friend.

I received yesterday, from the General, another Letter of T. S. An unknown auxiliary having started up in my behalf. I believe I shall leave the business of answering to him, having no leisure myself for controversy. He lies very open to a very effectual reply.

My dearest Cousin, adieu ! I hope to write to you but once more before we meet, But oh ! this coach-maker, and oh ! this holiday week !

Yours, with impatient desire to see you,

W. C.



LETTER LVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Olney, June 9, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The little time that I can devote to any other purpose than that of Poetry, is, as you may suppose, stolen. Homer is urgent. Much is done, but much remains undone, and no school-boy is more attentive to the performance of his daily task than I am. You will therefore excuse me, if at present, I am both unfrequent and short.

The Paper tells me that the Chancellor has relapsed, and I am
truly

truly sorry to hear it. The first attack was dangerous, but a second must be more formidable still. It is not probable that I should ever hear from him again, if he survive; yet, of the much that I should have felt for him, had our connection never been interrupted, I still feel much. Every body will feel the loss of a man whose abilities have made him of such general importance.

I correspond again with Colman, and upon the most friendly footing, and find in his instance, and in some others, that an intimate intercourse which has been only casually suspended, not forfeited on either side by outrage, is capable not only of revival, but improvement.

I had a Letter some time since that gave me great pleasure, from your sister Fanny. Such notices from old friends are always pleasant, and of such pleasures I have received many lately. They refresh the remembrance of early days, and make me young again. The noble institution of the Nonsense Club will be forgotten, when we are gone, who composed it; but I often think of your most heroic line, written at one of our meetings, and especially think of it when I am translating Homer.

“ To whom replied the Devil yard-long-tail’d.”

There never was any thing more truly Grecian, than that triple

D D 2

epithet,

epithet, and were it possible to introduce it into either Iliad or Odyssey, I should certainly steal it.

I am now flushed with expectation of Lady Hesketh, who spends the summer with us. We hope to see her next week. We have found admirable lodgings both for her, and her suite, and a Quaker in this town, still more admirable than they, who, as if he loved her as much as I do, furnishes them for her with real elegance.

W. C.

LETTER LIX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Olney, June 9, 1786.

My dear Cousin's arrival, has, as it could not fail to do, made us happier than we ever were at Olney. Her great kindness in giving us her company, is a cordial that I shall feel the effect of, not only while she is here, but while I live,

Olney will not be much longer the place of our habitation. At a village, two miles distant, we have hired a house of Mr. Throckmorton, a much better than we occupy at present, and yet not more expensive. It is situated very near to our most agreeable landlord, and his agreeable pleasure grounds. In him, and in his wife, we shall find such companions as will always make the time
pass

pass pleasantly, while they are in the country, and his grounds will afford us good air, and good walking room in the winter; two advantages which we have not enjoyed at Olney, where I have no neighbour with whom I can converse, and where, seven months in the year, I have been imprisoned by dirty and impassable ways, till both my health and Mrs. Unwin's, have suffered materially.

Homer is ever importunate, and will not suffer me to spend half the time with my distant friends that I would gladly give them,

W. C.

LETTER LX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Olney, Oct. 6, 1786.

You have not heard, I suppose, that the ninth book of my Translation is at the bottom of the Thames. But it is even so. A storm overtook it in its way to Kingston, and it sunk together with the whole cargo of the boat in which it was a passenger. Not figuratively foreshowing, I hope, by its submersion, the fate of all the rest. My kind and generous Cousin, who leaves nothing undone, that she thinks can conduce to my comfort, encouragement, or convenience, is my transcriber also. *She* wrote the copy, and *she* will have to write it again—*Hers*, therefore,
is

is the damage. I have a thousand reasons to lament that the time approaches when we must lose her. She has made a winterly summer a most delightful one, but the winter itself we must spend without her.

W. C.

The Letters which I have just imparted to my reader, exhibit a picture so minute, and so admirable, of the life, the studies, and the affections of Cowper, during the period to which they relate, that they require no comment from his Biographer. They must render all who read them, intimately acquainted with the Writer, and the result of such intimacy must be, what it is at once my duty, and my delight to promote, an increase of public affection for his enchanting character, an effect, which all his posthumous compositions are excellently suited to extend and confirm.

It is now incumbent on me to relate the consequences of a visit, so fondly expected by the Poet, and happily productive of a change in his local situation.

It does not always happen, when the heart and fancy have indulged themselves, with such fervency, in a prospect of delight, from the renewed society of a long absent friend, it does not always happen, that the pleasure, on its arrival, proves exactly what it promised to be on its approach. But in the present case, to the
honour

LIFE OF COWPER.

honour of the two friends concerned, the delightful vision was followed by a reality of delight. Cowper was truly happy in receiving, and settling his beloved, though long unseen, relation, as his neighbour; she was comfortably lodged in the Vicarage of Olney, a mansion so near to his residence, and so commodious from the private communication between their two houses, that the long separated, and most seasonably re-united friends, here enjoyed all the easy intercourse of a domestic union.

Cowper derived from this fortunate event not only the advantage of daily conversation with another cultivated mind, in affectionate unison with his own, but, as his new neighbour had brought her carriage and horses to Olney, he was gradually tempted to survey, in a wider range, the face of a country, that he loved, and to mix, a little more, with its most worthy inhabitants. His life had been so retired at Olney, that he had not even extended his excursions to the neighbouring town of Newport-Pagnell, in the course of many years; but the convenience of a carriage induced him, in August, to visit Mr. Bull, who resided there—the friend, to whose assiduous attention he had felt himself much obliged in a season of mental depression. A few Letters of Cowper to this gentleman are so expressive of cordial esteem, and so agreeably illustrate the character of each, that I shall take this opportunity of making a short selection from the private papers, of which the kindness of the person, to whom they are addressed, has enabled

enabled me to avail myself. When Cowper published the first Volume of his Poems, Mr. Bull wrote to him on the occasion : The answer of the Poet, March 24, 1782, I reserve for a future part of my Work. A subsequent Letter, dated October 27th, in the same year, opens with this lively paragraph :—

“ Mon aimable and très cher Ami,

“ It is not in the power of chaises, or
“ chariots, to carry you, where my affections will not follow you ;
“ if I heard, that you were gone to finish your days in the Moon,
“ I should not love you the less ; but should contemplate the place
“ of your abode, as often as it appeared in the Heavens, and say,
“ Farewell, my Friend, for ever ! Lost, but not forgotten ! Live
“ happy in thy lantern, and smoke the remainder of thy pipes in
“ peace ! Thou art rid of earth, at least of all its cares, and so far
“ can I rejoice in thy removal ; and as to the cares that are to be
“ found in the Moon, I am resolved to suppose them lighter than
“ those below—heavier they can hardly be.”

The Letter closes with a sentence that ascertains the date of those translations from the Poetry of Madame Guion, which I have already mentioned, as executed at the request of Mr. Bull.—
“ Madame Guion is finished, but not quite transcribed.” In a subsequent Letter he speaks of these, and of other Poems. I transcribe the passage, and a preceding paragraph, in which he
expatiates

expatiates on thunder-storms with the feelings of a Poet, and with his usual felicity of expression.—“ I was always an admirer of
 “ thunder-storms, even before I knew, whose voice I heard in
 “ them ; but especially an admirer of thunder rolling over the great
 “ waters. There is something singularly majestic in the sound of it
 “ at sea, where the eye and the ear have uninterrupted opportunity
 “ of observation, and the concavity above being made spacious,
 “ reflects it with more advantage. I have consequently envied
 “ you your situation, and the enjoyment of those refreshing breezes,
 “ that belong to it. We have indeed been regaled with some of
 “ these bursts of ætherial music.—The peals have been as loud by
 “ the report of a gentleman, who lived many years in the West-
 “ Indies, as were ever heard in those islands, and the flashes as
 “ splendid ; but when the thunder preaches, an horizon bounded
 “ by the ocean is the only sounding-board.”

“ I have had but little leisure, strange as it may seem, and that
 “ little I devoted for a month after your departure, to Madame
 “ Guion. I have made fair copies of all the pieces I have produced
 “ on this last occasion, and will put them into your hands, when
 “ we meet. They are yours, to serve you as you please ; you may
 “ take and leave as you like, for my purpose is already served ;
 “ they have amused me, and I have no further demand upon them :
 “ The Lines upon Friendship however, which were not sufficiently
 “ of a piece with the others, will not now be wanted. I have

“some other little things, which I will communicate, when time shall serve; but I cannot now transcribe them,”

What the Author here modestly calls, “The Lines on Friendship,” I regard as one of the most admirable among his minor Poems. Mr. Bull, who has been induced to print the translations from Madame Guion, by an apprehension of their being surreptitiously and inaccurately published, has inserted these stanzas on Friendship, in the little volume that he has recently imparted to the public, from the press of Newport-Pagnell; but as the Poem is singularly beautiful, and seems to have been re-touched by its Author, with an attention proportioned to its merit, I shall introduce it here in a corrected state, and notice such variations as I find in the two copies before me.

ON FRIENDSHIP.

Amicitia nisi inter bonos esse non potest. CICERO.

1.

*What virtue can we name, or grace,
But men unqualified and base,
Will boast it their possession?*

Profusions

VARIATIONS.

I.—1. What virtue, or what mental grace,

*Profusion apes the noble part
Of liberality of heart,
And dullness of discretion.*

2.

*But as the gem of richest cost
Is ever counterfeited most;
So always imitation
Employs the utmost skill she can
To counterfeit the faithful man,
The friend of long duration.*

3.

*Some will pronounce me too severe,
But long experience speaks me clear,
Therefore, that censure scorning,*

E E 2

I will

VARIATIONS.

II.—If ev'ry polish'd gem we find,
Illuminating heart or mind,
Provoke to imitation,
No wonder friendship does the same,
That jewel of the purest flame,
Or rather constellation.

III.—No knave, but boldly will pretend
The requisites that form a friend,
A real, and a sound one;

*I will proceed to mark the shelves,
On which so many dash themselves,
And give the simple warning.*

4.

*Youth, unadmonish'd by a guide,
Will trust to any fair outside :—
An error, soon corrected !
For who, but learns, with riper years,
That man, when smoothest he appears,
Is most to be suspected ?*

5.

*But here again a danger lies ;
Lest, thus deluded by our eyes,
And taking trash for treasure,
We should, when undeceiv'd, conclude
Friendship imaginary good,
A mere Utopian pleasure.*

An

VARIATIONS.

Nor any fool he would deceive,
But prove as ready to believe,
And dream, that he has found one.

- IV.—1. Candid, and generous, and just,
2. Boys care but little, whom they trust:
V.—2. Lest, having misemploy'd our eyes,
4. We should unwarily conclude
5. Friendship a false ideal good.

6.

*An acquisition rather rare
Is yet no subject of despair ;
Nor should it seem distressful,
If either on forbidden ground,
Or where it was not to be found,
We sought it unsuccessful.*

7.

*No friendship will abide the test,
That stands, on sordid interest
And mean self-love erected ;
Nor such, as may awhile subsist
'Twixt sensualist and sensualist,
For vicious ends connected.*

8.

*Who hopes a friend, should have a heart
Himself, well furnish'd for the part,
And ready on occasion*

To

 VARIATIONS.

VI.—3. Nor is it wise complaining,

6. We sought without attaining.

VII.—5. Between the sot and sensualist.

*To shew the virtue that he seeks ;
For, 'tis an union, that bespeaks
A just reciprocation.*

9.

*A fretful temper will divide
The closest knot that may be tied,
By ceaseless sharp corrosion :
A temper passionate and fierce
May suddenly your joys disperse
At one immense explosion.*

In

 VARIATIONS.

VIII.—Who seeks a friend, should come dispos'd

T^e exhibit, in full bloom disclos'd,
The graces and the beauties,
That form the character he seeks,
For, 'tis an union that bespeaks
Reciprocated duties.

Mutual attention is implied,
And equal truth on either side,
And constantly supported :
'Tis senseless arrogance, t^eaccuse
Another of sinister views,
Our own as much distorted.

But will sincerity suffice ?
It is indeed above all price,
And must be made the basis ;
But ev'ry virtue of the soul
Must constitute the charming whole,
All shining in their places.

10.

*In vain the talkative unite
With hope of permanent delight :
The secret just committed
They drop, thro' mere desire to prate,
Forgetting its important weight,
And by themselves outwitted.*

11.

*How bright soe'er the prospect seems,
All thoughts of friendship are but dreams,
If envy chance to creep in.
An envious man, if you succeed,
May prove a dang'rous foe indeed,
But not a friend worth keeping.*

12.

*As envy pines at good possess'd,
So jealousy looks forth distress'd,
On good, that seems approaching ;
And if success his steps attend,
Discerns a rival in a friend,
And hates him for encroaching.*

Hence,

13.

*Hence authors of illustrious name,
 Unless belied by common fame,
 Are sadly prone to quarrel ;
 To deem the wit a friend displays
 So much of loss to their own praise,
 And pluck each other's laurel.*

14.

*A man, renown'd for repartee,
 Will seldom scruple to make free,
 With friendship's finest feeling ;
 Will thrust a dagger at your breast,
 And tell you, 'twas a special jest,
 By way of balm for healing,*

15.

*Beware of Tatlers! keep your ear
 Close-stopt against the tales they bear,
 Fruits of their own invention !*

The

 VARIATIONS.

XIV.— 5. And say he wounded you in jest.

XV. — Who keeps an open ear
 For tatlers, will be sure to hear
 The trumpet of invention.

*The separation of chief friends
Is what their kindness most intends ;
Their sport is your dissension.*

16.

*Friendship, that wantonly admits
A joco-serious play of wits
In brilliant altercation,
Is union such, as indicates,
Like hand-in-hand insurance-plates,
Danger of conflagration.*

17.

*Some fickle creatures boast a soul
True as the needle to the pole ;
Yet shifting, like the weather,
The needle's constancy forego
For any novelty, and show
Its variations rather.*

VOL. I.

F F

Insensibility

VARIATIONS.

Aspersions is the babbler's trade,
To listen is to lend him aid,
And rush into contention :

XVI.—1. A friendship, that in frequent fits
Of controversial rage emits
The sparks of disputation.

XVII.—3. Their humour yet so various,
They manifest their whole life through
The needle's deviation too,
Their love is so precarious.

18.

*Insensibility makes some
 Unseasonably deaf and dumb,
 When most you need their pity.
 'Tis waiting, till the tears shall fall
 From Gog and Magog in Guildhall,
 Those playthings of the City.**

19.

*The great and small but rarely meet
 On terms of amity complete.
 Th' attempt would scarce be madder,
 Should any, from the bottom, hope
 At one huge stride to reach the top
 Of an erected ladder.*

Courtier

* This was written before the removal of them.

 VARIATIONS.

XIX.—3. Plebeians must surrender,
 And yield so much to noble folk,
 It is combining fire with smoke,
 Obscurity with splendor.
 Some are so placid and serene,
 (As Irish bogs are always green)
 They sleep secure from waking,
 And are indeed a bog that bears
 Your unparticipated cares,
 Unmov'd, and without quaking.

20.

*Courtier and patriot cannot mix
 Their het'rogenous politics
 Without an effervescence,
 Such as of salts with lemon-juice,
 But which is rarely known t'induce,
 Like that, a coalescence.*

21.

*Religion should extinguish strife,
 And make a calm of human life.
 But even those who differ
 Only on topics left at large,
 How fiercely will they meet and charge!
 No combatants are stiffer,*

22.

*To prove, alas! my main intent,
 Needs no great cost of argument,
 No cutting and contriving.*

F F 2

Seeking

VARIATIONS.

- XX.—4. Like that of salts with lemon-juice,
 Which does not yet like that produce
 A friendly coalescence.
- XXI.—4. On points, which God has left at large.
- XXII.—1. To prove at last my main intent,
 Needs no expence of argument,

*Seeking a real friend we seem,
T' adopt the chemist's golden dream
With still less hope of thriving.*

23.

*Then judge before you chuse your man,
As circumspectly as you can,
And, having made election,
See, that no disrespect of yours,
Such, as a friend but ill endures,
Enfeeble his affection.*

24.

*It is not timber, lead, and stone,
An architect requires alone,*

To

VARIATIONS.

Sometimes the fault is all your own,
Some blemish in due time made known
By trespass or omission :
Sometimes occasion brings to light
Our friend's defect, long hid from sight,
And even from suspicion.

XXIII.—1. Then judge yourself, and prove your man.

(4. Beware, no negligence of yours.

That secrets are a sacred trust,
That friends should be sincere and just,

That constancy befits them,

Are observations on the case,

That savor much of common-place,

And all the world admits them.

XXIV.—1. But 'tis not timber, lead, and stone.

*To finish a great building,
The palace were but half complete,
Could he by any chance forget
The carving and the gilding.*

25.

*As similarity of mind,
Or something not to be defin'd,
First rivets our attention;
So, manners decent and polite,
The same we practis'd at first sight,
Must save it from declension.*

26.

*The man who hails you Tom or Jack,
And proves by thumping on your back
His sense of your great merit,
Is such a friend that one had need
Be very much his friend indeed,
To pardon, or to bear it.*

Some

 VARIATIONS.

XXIV.—3. To finish a fine building.

5. If he could possibly forget.

XXV.—3. First fixes our attention.

XXVI.—1. The man that hails you Tom or Jack,

And proves by thumps upon your back,

How he esteems your merit.

27.

*Some friends make this their prudent plan—
 Say little, and hear all you can,
 Safe policy, but hateful!
 So barren sands imbibe the show'r,
 But render neither fruit nor flower,
 Unpleasant, and ungrateful.*

28.

*They whisper trivial things, and small;
 But to communicate at all
 Things serious, deem improper.
 Their fæculence and froth they show,
 But keep their best contents below,
 Just like a simm'ring copper.*

29.

*These samples (for alas! at last
 These are but samples, and a taste
 Of evils, yet unmention'd)*

May

 VARIATIONS.

- XXVII.—1. Some act upon this prudent plan—
 XXVIII.— The man (I trust) if shy to me,
 Shall find me as reserv'd as he.
 No subterfuge or pleading,
 Shall win my confidence again,
 I will by no means entertain
 A spy on my proceeding.

*May prove the task, a task indeed,
In which 'tis much if we succeed,
However well intention'd.*

30.

*Pursue the theme, and you shall find
A disciplin'd and furnish'd mind
To be at least expedient ;
And, after summing all the rest,
Religion ruling in the breast
A principal ingredient.*

31.

*True Friendship has in short a grace
More than terrestrial in its face,
That proves it Heaven-descended.*

Man's

VARIATIONS.

XXIX.—Pursue the search, and you will find
Good-sense, and knowledge of mankind.
The noblest friendship ever shown
The Saviour's history makes known,
Tho' some have turn'd and turn'd it,
And (whether being craz'd, or blind,
Or seeking with a bias'd mind)
Have not (it seems) discern'd it.
Oh Friendship, if my soul forego
Thy dear delights, while here below,
To mortify and grieve me,
May I myself at last appear,
Unworthy, base, and insincere,
Or may my friend deceive me !

*Man's love of woman not so pure,
Nor when sincerest, so secure,
To last till life is ended,*

This sprightly little Poem contains the essence of all that has been said on this interesting subject, by the best writers of different countries. It is pleasing to reflect, that a man, who entertained such refined ideas of friendship, and expressed them so happily, was singularly fortunate in this very important article of human life. Indeed he was fortunate in this respect to such a degree, that Providence seems to have supplied him most unexpectedly, at different periods of his troubled existence, with exactly such friends, as the peculiar exigences of his situation required. The truth of this remark is exemplified in the seasonable assistance, that his tender spirits derived from the kindness of Mrs. Unwin, at Huntingdon; of Lady Austen and Lady Hesketh, at Olney, and of his young kinsman, in Norfolk, who will soon attract the notice, and obtain the esteem of my reader, as the affectionate superintendant of Cowper's declining days. To the honour of human nature, and of the present times, it will appear, that a sequestered Poet, pre-eminent in genius and calamity, was beloved and assisted by his friends of both sexes, with a purity of zeal, and an inexhaustible ardour of affection, more resembling the friendship of the heroic ages, than the precarious attachments of the modern world.

The

The visit of Lady Hesketh to Olney, led to a very favourable change in the residence of Cowper. He had now passed nineteen years in a scene that was far from suiting him. The house he inhabited looked on a market-place, and once, in a season of illness, he was so apprehensive of being incommoded by the bustle of a fair, that he requested to lodge, for a single night, under the roof of his friend Mr. Newton; and he was tempted, by the more comfortable situation of the Vicarage, to remain fourteen months in the house of his benevolent neighbour. His intimacy with this venerable Divine was so great, that Mr. Newton has described it in the following remarkable terms, in *Memoirs of the Poet*, which affection induced him to begin, but which the troubles and infirmities of very advanced life, have obliged him to relinquish.

“ For nearly twelve years we were seldom separated for seven hours at a time, when we were awake, and at home :—The first six I passed in daily admiring, and aiming to imitate him: during the second six, I walked pensively with him in the valley of the shadow of death.”

Mr. Newton records, with a becoming satisfaction, the evangelical charity of his Friend: “ He loved the poor,” (says his devout Memorialist :) “ He often visited them in their cottages, conversed with them in the most condescending manner, sympathized with them, counselled and comforted them in their distresses; and those, who were seriously disposed, were often cheered, and

“ animated, by his prayers !”—After the removal of Mr. Newton to London, and the departure of Lady Austen, Olney had no particular attractions for Cowper ; and Lady Hesketh was happy in promoting the project, which had occurred to him, of removing, with Mrs. Unwin, to the near and pleasant village of Weston. A scene highly favourable to his health and amusement ! For, with a very comfortable mansion, it afforded him a garden, and a field of considerable extent, which he delighted to cultivate and embellish. With these he had advantages still more desirable—easy, perpetual access to the spacious and tranquil pleasure grounds of his accomplished and benevolent landlord, Mr. Throckmorton, whose neighbouring house supplied him with society peculiarly suited to his gentle and delicate spirit.

He removed from Olney to Weston, in November 1786. The course of his life in his new situation (the spot most pleasing to his fancy !) will be best described by the subsequent series of his Letters to that amiable Relation, to whom he considered himself as particularly indebted for this improvement in his domestic scenery. With these I shall occasionally connect a selection of his Letters to other friends, and particularly the Letters addressed to one of his most intimate correspondents, who happily commenced an acquaintance with the Poet, in the beginning of the year 1787. I add, with pleasure, the name of Mr. Rose, the Barrister, whose friendship I was so fortunate as to share, by meeting him at
Weston.

Weston, in a subsequent period, and whom I instantly learnt to regard by finding that he held very justly a place of the most desirable distinction in the heart of Cowper,

LETTER LXI.

To Lady HESKETH.

Weston-Lodge, Nov. 26th, 1786.

It is my birth-day, my beloved Cousin, and I determine to employ a part of it that it may not be destitute of festivity, in writing to you. The dark, thick fog that has obscured it, would have been a burthen to me at Olney, but here I have hardly attended to it. The neatness and snugness of our abode, compensates all the dreariness of the season, and whether the ways are wet or dry, our house at least is always warm and commodious. Oh! for you, my Cousin, to partake these comforts with us! I will not begin already to tease you upon that subject, but Mrs. Unwin remembers to have heard from your own lips, that you hate London in the spring. Perhaps, therefore, by that time, you may be glad to escape from a scene which will be every day growing more disagreeable, that you may enjoy the comforts of the Lodge. You well know that the best house has a desolate appearance, unfurnished. This house accordingly, since it has been occupied by us, and our *Meubles*, is as much superior

to what it was when you saw it, as you can imagine. The parlour is even elegant. When I say that the parlour is elegant, I do not mean to insinuate that the study is not so. It is neat, warm, and silent, and a much better study than I deserve, if I do not produce in it, an incomparable Translation of Homer. I think every day of those Lines of Milton, and congratulate myself on having obtained, before I am quite superannuated, what he seems not to have hoped for sooner.

*" And may at length my weary age,
Find out the peaceful hermitage !"*

For if it is not a hermitage, at least it is a much better thing, and you must always understand, my dear, that when Poets talk of cottages, hermitages, and such like things, they mean a house with six sashes in front, two comfortable parlours, a smart stair-case, and three bed chambers of convenient dimensions; in short, exactly such a house as this.

The Throckmortons continue the most obliging neighbours in the world. One morning last week, they both went with me to the Cliffs—a scene, my dear, in which you would delight beyond measure, but which you cannot visit except in the spring or autumn. The heat of summer, and the clinging dirt of winter, would destroy you. What is called the Cliff, is no cliff, nor at all like one, but a beautiful terrace, sloping gently down to the Ouse, and from the
brow

brow of which, though not lofty, you have a view of such a valley, as makes that which you see from the hills near Olney, and which I have had the honour to celebrate, an affair of no consideration.

Wintry as the weather is, do not suspect that it confines me. I ramble daily, and every day change my ramble. Wherever I go, I find short grass under my feet, and when I have travelled perhaps five miles, come home with shoes not at all too dirty for a drawing-room. I was pacing yesterday under the elms, that surround the field in which stands the great alcove, when lifting my eyes I saw two black genteel figures bolt through a hedge into the path where I was walking. You guess already who they were, and that they could be nobody but our neighbours. They had seen me from a hill at a distance, and had traversed a great turnip-field to get at me. You see therefore, my dear, that I am in some request. Alas! in too much request with some people. The Verses of Cadwallader have found me at last.

I am charmed with your account of our little Cousin* at Kensington. If the world does not spoil him hereafter, he will be a valuable man.

Good night, and may God bless thee,

W. C.

LETTER

* Lord Cowper.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 4, 1786.

I sent you, my dear, a melancholy Letter, and I do not know that I shall now send you one very unlike it: Not that any thing occurs in consequence of our late loss, more afflictive than was to be expected, but the mind does not perfectly recover its tone after a shock like that which has been felt so lately. This, I observe, that though my experience has long since taught me that this world is a world of shadows, and that it is the more prudent, as well as the more Christian course, to possess the comforts that we find in it, as if we possessed them not, it is no easy matter to reduce this doctrine into practice. We forget that that God who gave it, may, when he pleases, take it away; and that perhaps it may please him to take it at a time when we least expect it, or at least disposed to part from it. Thus it has happened in the present case. There never was a moment in Unwin's life, when there seemed to be more urgent want of him, than the moment in which he died. He had attained to an age, when, if they are at any time useful, men become more useful to their families, their friends, and the world. His parish began to feel, and to be sensible of the advantages of his ministry. The Clergy around him were many of them awed by his example. His children were thriving

thriving under his own tuition and management, and his eldest boy, is likely to feel his loss severely, being by his years, in some respect qualified to understand the value of such a parent, by his literary proficiency, too clever for a school-boy, and too young at the same time for the University. The removal of a man in the prime of life, of such a character, and with such connexions, seems to make a void in society, that never can be filled. God seemed to have made him just what he was, that he might be a blessing to others, and when the influence of his character and abilities began to be felt, removed him. These are mysteries, my dear, that we cannot contemplate without astonishment, but which will nevertheless be explained hereafter, and must in the mean time be revered in silence. It is well for his Mother, that she has spent her life in the practice of an habitual acquiescence in the dispensations of Providence, else I know that this stroke would have been heavier, after all that she has suffered upon another account, than she could have borne. She derives, as she well may, great consolation from the thought that he lived the life, and died the death of a Christian. The consequence is, if possible, more unavoidable than the most mathematical conclusion, that therefore he is happy. So farewell, my friend Unwin! the first man for whom I conceived a friendship after my removal from St. Alban's, and for whom I cannot but still continue to feel a friendship, though I shall see thee with these eyes no more.

W. C.

LETTER

To Lady HESKETH.

Weston, Dec. 9, 1786.

I am perfectly sure that you are mistaken, though I do not wonder at it, considering the singular nature of the event, in the judgment that you form of poor Unwin's death, as it affects the interests of his intended pupil. When a tutor was wanted for him, you sought out the wisest and best man for the office within the circle of your connexions. It pleased God to take him home to himself. Men eminently wise and good are very apt to die, because they are fit to do so. You found in Unwin, a man worthy to succeed him, and He, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, seeing no doubt that Unwin was ripe for a removal into a better state, removed him also. The matter viewed in this light seems not so wonderful as to refuse all explanation, except such as in a melancholy moment you have given to it. And I am so convinced that the little boy's destiny had no influence at all in hastening the death of his tutors elect, that were it not impossible, on more accounts than one, that I should be able to serve him in that capacity, I would without the least fear of dying a moment the sooner, offer myself to that office; I would even do it, were I conscious of the same fitness for another and better state, that I believe them to have been both endowed with. In that case, I
perhaps

perhaps might die too, but if I should, it would not be on account of that connexion. Neither, my dear, had your interference in the business any thing to do with the catastrophe. Your whole conduct in it must have been acceptable in the sight of God, as it was directed by principles of the purest benevolence.

I have not touched Homer to day. Yesterday was one of my terrible seasons, and when I arose this morning I found that I had not sufficiently recovered myself to engage in such an occupation. Having letters to write, I the more willingly gave myself a dispensation. Good Night.

W. C.

LETTER LXIV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Weston, Dec. 9, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We had just begun to enjoy the pleasantness of our new situation, to find at least as much comfort in it as the season of the year would permit, when affliction found us out in our retreat, and the news reached us of the death of Mr. Unwin. He had taken a Western tour with Mr. Henry Thornton, and in his return, at Winchester, was seized with a putrid fever, which sent him to his grave. He is gone to it, however, though young, as fit for it as age itself could have made him. Regretted indeed,

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and always to be regretted, by those who knew him, for he had every thing that makes a man valuable both in his principles and in his manners, but leaving still this consolation to his surviving friends, that he was desirable in this world chiefly because he was so well prepared for a better.

I find myself here, situated exactly to my mind. Weston is one of the prettiest villages in England, and the walks about it at all seasons of the year delightful. I know that you will rejoice with me in the change that we have made, and for which I am altogether indebted to Lady Hesketh. It is a change as great, as, to compare metropolitan things with rural, from St. Giles to Grosvenor Square. Our house is in all respects commodious, and in some degree, elegant; and I cannot give you a better idea of that which we have left, than by telling you the present candidates for it are a publican and a shoemaker.

W. C.

LETTER LXV.

To Lady HESKETH.

Weston, Dec. 21, 1786.

Your welcome Letter, my beloved Cousin, which ought by the date to have arrived on Sunday, being by some untoward accident delayed, came not till yesterday. It came,

came, however, and has relieved me from a thousand distressing apprehensions on your account.

The dew of your intelligence has refreshed my poetical laurels. A little praise now and then is very good for your hard working Poet, who is apt to grow languid and perhaps careless, without it. Praise, I find, affects us as money does. The more a man gets of it, with the more vigilance he watches over and preserves it. Such at least is its effect on me, and you may assure yourself that I will never lose a mite of it for want of care.

I have already invited the good Padre in general terms, and he shall positively dine here next week, whether he will or not. I do not at all suspect that his kindness to Protestants has any thing insidious in it, any more than I suspect that he transcribes Homer for me with a view for my conversion. He would find me a tough piece of business I can tell him, for when I had no religion at all, I had yet a terrible dread of the Pope, How much more now!

I should have sent you a longer Letter, but was obliged to devote my last evening to the melancholy employment of composing a Latin Inscription for the tomb-stone of poor William, two copies of which I wrote out and inclosed, one to Henry Thornton, and one to Mr. Newton, Homer stands by me biting his thumbs,

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and

and swears, that if I do not leave off directly, he will choak me with bristly Greek, that shall stick in my throat for ever.

W. C.

LETTER LXVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 8, 1787.

I have had a little nervous fever lately, my dear, that has somewhat abridged my sleep, and though I find myself better to day than I have been since it seized me, yet I feel my head lightish, and not in the best order for writing; you will find me therefore perhaps not only less alert in my manner than I usually am when my spirits are good, but rather shorter. I will however proceed to scribble till I find that it fatigues me, and then will do as I know you would bid me do were you here, shut up my desk, and take a walk.

The good General tells me, that in the eight first Books which I have sent him, he still finds alterations and amendments necessary, of which I myself am equally persuaded; and he asks my leave to lay them before an intimate friend of his, of whom he gives a character that bespeaks him highly deserving such a trust. To this I have no objection, desiring only to make the Translation as perfect as I can make it; if God grant me life and health, I
would

would spare no labour to secure that point. The General's Letter is extremely kind, and both for matter and manner, like all the rest of his dealings, with his Cousin the Poet.

I had a Letter, also yesterday, from Mr. Smith, Member for Nottingham. Though we never saw each other, he writes to me in the most friendly terms, and interests himself much in my Homer, and in the success of my subscription. Speaking on this latter subject, he says, that my Poems are read by hundreds who know nothing of my proposals, and makes no doubt that they would subscribe, if they did. I have myself always thought them imperfectly, or rather insufficiently announced.

I could pity the poor woman who has been weak enough to claim my Song. Such pilferings are sure to be detected. I wrote it, I know not how long, but I suppose four years ago. The Rose in question, was a Rose given to Lady Austen by Mrs. Unwin, and the incident that suggested the subject occurred in the room in which you slept at the Vicarage, which Lady Austen made her dining room. Some time since, Mr. Bull going to London, I gave him a copy of it, which he undertook to convey to Nichols, the Printer of the Gentleman's Magazine. He shewed it to a Mrs. C——, who begged to copy it, and promised to send it to the Printer's by her servant. Three or four months afterwards, and when I had concluded it was lost, I saw it in the Gentleman's Magazine, with my signature, W. C. Poor simpleton! She will find

find now, perhaps, that the Rose had a thorn, and that she has pricked her fingers with it. Adieu! my beloved Cousin.

W. C.

LETTER LXVII.

To Lady HESKETH,

The Lodge, Jan. 8th, 1787:

I have been so much indisposed with the fever that I told you had seized me, my nights during the whole week may be said to have been almost sleepless. The consequence has been, that except the translation of about thirty lines at the conclusion of the 13th Book, I have been forced to abandon Homer entirely. This was a sensible mortification to me, as you may suppose, and felt the more, because my spirits of course failing with my strength, I seemed to have peculiar need of my old amusement; it seemed hard therefore to be forced to resign it just when I wanted it most. But Homer's battles cannot be fought by a man who does not sleep well, and who has not some little degree of animation in the day time. Last night, however, quite contrary to my expectations, the fever left me entirely, and I slept quietly, soundly, and long. If it please God that it return not, I shall soon find myself in a condition to proceed. I walk constantly, that is to say, Mrs. Unwin and I together; for at these times I keep her continually employed, and
never

never suffer her to be absent from me many minutes: She gives me all her time, and all her attention, and forgets that there is another object in the world.

Mrs. Carter thinks on the subject of dreams as every body else does, that is to say, according to her own experience. She has had no extraordinary ones, and therefore accounts them only the ordinary operations of the fancy. Mine are of a texture that will not suffer me to ascribe them to so inadequate a cause, or to any cause but the operation of an exterior agency. I have a mind, my dear, (and to you I will venture to boast of it) as free from superstition as any man living, neither do I give heed to dreams in general as predictive, though particular dreams I believe to be so. Some very sensible persons, and I suppose Mrs. Carter among them, will acknowledge that in old times God spoke by dreams, but affirm with much boldness, that he has since ceased to do so. If you ask them why? They answer, because he has now revealed his will in the Scripture, and there is no longer any need that he should instruct or admonish us by dreams. I grant that with respect to doctrines and precepts, he has left us in want of nothing; but has he thereby precluded himself in any of the operations of his Providence? Surely not. It is perfectly a different consideration; and the same need that there ever was of his interference in this way, there is still and ever must be, while man continues blind and fallible, and a creature beset with dangers, which he can neither
foresee

foresee nor obviate. His operations however of this kind are, I allow, very rare; and as to the generality of dreams, they are made of such stuff, and are in themselves so insignificant, that though I believe them all to be the manufacture of others, not our own, I account it not a farthing matter who manufactures them. So much for dreams.

My fever is not yet gone, but sometimes seems to leave me: It is altogether of the nervous kind, and attended, now and then, with much dejection.

A young gentleman called here yesterday, who came six miles out of his way to see me. He was on a journey to London from Glasgow, having just left the University there. He came, I suppose, partly to satisfy his own curiosity, but chiefly, as it seemed, to bring me the thanks of some of the Scotch Professors for my two Volumes. His name is Rose, an Englishman. Your spirits being good, you will derive more pleasure from this incident than I can at present, therefore I send it. Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER LXVIII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, July 24th, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

This is the first time I have written these six months, and nothing but the constraint of obligation could induce

induce me to write now. I cannot be so wanting to myself as not to endeavour at least, to thank you both for the visits with which you have favoured me, and the Poems that you sent me; in my present state of mind I taste nothing; nevertheless I read; partly from habit, and partly because it is the only thing that I am capable of.

I have therefore read Burn's Poems, and have read them twice. And though they be written in a language that is new to me, and many of them on subjects much inferior to the author's ability, I think them on the whole a very extraordinary production. He is, I believe, the only Poet these kingdoms have produced in the lower rank of life, since Shakespeare, I should rather say since Prior, who need not be indebted for any part of his praise, to a charitable consideration of his origin, and the disadvantages under which he has laboured. It will be pity if he should not hereafter divest himself of barbarism, and content himself with writing pure English, in which he appears perfectly qualified to excel. He who can command admiration, dishonours himself if he aims no higher than to raise a laugh.

I am, dear Sir, with my best wishes for your prosperity, and with Mrs. Unwin's respects,

Your obliged and affectionate humble servant.

W. C.

LETTER LXIX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, Aug. 27, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I have not yet taken up the pen again, except to write to you. The little taste that I have had of your company, and your kindness in finding me out, make me wish, that we were nearer neighbours, and that there were not so great a disparity in our years ; that is to say, not that you were older, but that I were younger. Could we have met in early life, I flatter myself that we might have been more intimate, than now we are likely to be. But you shall not find me slow to cultivate such a measure of your regard, as your friends of your own age can spare me. When your route shall lie through this country, I shall hope that the same kindness which has prompted you twice to call on me, will prompt you again ; and I shall be happy if on a future occasion, I may be able to give you a more cheerful reception, than can be expected from an invalide. My health and spirits are considerably improved, and I once more associate with my neighbours. My head however has been the worst part of me, and still continues so ; is subject to giddiness and pain, maladies very unfavourable to poetical employment; but a preparation of the Bark, which I take regularly, has so far been of service to me in those respects, as to encourage in me a hope, that by perseverance in the
use

use of it, I may possibly find myself qualified to resume the Translation of Homer.

When I cannot walk, I read ; and read perhaps more than is good for me. But I cannot be idle. The only mercy that I shew myself in this respect is, that I read nothing that requires much closeness of application. I lately finished the perusal of a book, which in former years I have more than once attacked, but never till now conquered ; some other book always interfered, before I could finish it. The work I mean is Barclay's *Argenis*, and if ever you allow yourself to read for mere amusement, I can recommend it to you (provided you have not already perused it) as the most amusing romance that ever was written. It is the only one indeed of an old date that I ever had the patience to go through with. It is interesting in a high degree ; richer in incident than can be imagined, full of surprises, which the reader never fore-stalls, and yet free from all entanglement and confusion. The stile too appears to me to be such as would not dishonour Tacitus himself.

Poor Burns loses much of his deserved praise in this country, through our ignorance of his language. I despair of meeting with any Englishman who will take the pains that I have taken to understand him. His candle is bright, but shut up in a dark lantern. I lent him to a very sensible neighbour of mine, but his

uncouth dialect spoiled all, and before he had half read him through, he was quite *ramfeezled*.

W. C.

LETTER LXX.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Aug. 30, 1787.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Though it costs me something to write, it would cost me more to be silent. My intercourse with my neighbours being renewed, I can no longer seem to forget how many reasons there are why you especially should not be neglected; no neighbour indeed, but the kindest of my friends, and ere long, I hope, an inmate.

My health and spirits seem to be mending daily. To what end I know not, neither will conjecture, but endeavour, as far as I can, to be content that they do so. I use exercise, and take the air in the park and wilderness. I read much, but, as yet, write not. Our friends at the Hall make themselves more and more amiable in our account, by treating us rather as old friends, than as friends newly acquired. There are few days in which we do not meet, and I am now almost as much at home in their house as in our own. Mr. Throckmorton having long since put me in possession of

of all his ground, has now given me possession of his library. An acquisition of great value to me, who never have been able to live without books since I first knew my letters, and who have no books of my own. By his means I have been so well supplied, that I have not yet even looked at the Lounger, for which however I do not forget that I am obliged to you, *His* turn comes next, and I shall probably begin him to-morrow.

Mr. George Throckmorton is at the Hall. I thought I had known these brothers long enough to have found out all their talents and accomplishments; but I was mistaken. The day before yesterday after having walked with us, they *carried* us up to the library, (a more accurate writer would have said *conducted* us) and then they shewed me the contents of an immense port-folio, the work of their own hands. It was furnished with drawings of the architectural kind, executed in a most masterly manner, and among others, contained outside and inside views of the Pantheon, I mean the Roman one. They were all, I believe, made at Rome. Some men may be estimated at a first interview, but the Throckmortons must be seen often, and known long, before one can understand all their value.

They often enquire after you, and ask me whether you visit Weston this autumn. I answer, yes; and I charge you, my dearest Cousin, to authenticate my information. Write to me, and tell us
when

when we may expect to see you. We were disappointed that we had no Letter from you this morning. You will find me coated and buttoned according to your recommendation.

I write but little, because writing is become new to me ; but I shall come on by degrees. Mrs. Unwin begs to be affectionately remembered to you. She is in tolerable health, which is the chief comfort here that I have to boast of.

Yours, my dearest Cousin, as ever.

W. C.

LETTER LXXI.

To Lady HESKETH,

The Lodge, Sept. 4, 1787.

MY DEAREST COZ.

Come when thou canst come, secure of being always welcome. All that is here is thine, together with the hearts of those who dwell here. I am only sorry that your journey hither is necessarily postponed beyond the time when I did hope to have seen you, sorry too, that my Uncle's infirmities are the occasion of it. But years *will* have their course, and their effect ; they are happiest so far as this life is concerned, who like him escape those effects the longest, and who do not grow old before their time. Trouble and anguish do that for some, which only longevity does for others. A few months since I was older than your
Father

Father is now, and though I have lately recovered, as Falstaff says, *some smatch of my youth*, I have but little confidence, in truth none, in so flattering a change, but expect, *when I least expect it*, to wither again. The past is a pledge for the future.

Mr. G. is here, Mrs. Throckmorton's Uncle. He is lately arrived from Italy, where he has resided several years, and is so much the gentleman that it is impossible to be more so. Sensible, polite, obliging; slender in his figure, and in manners most engaging, every way worthy to be related to the Throckmortons.—I have read Savary's Travels into Egypt. Memoirs du Baron de Tott. Fenn's original Letters, the Letters of Frederic of Bohemia, and am now reading Memoirs d' Henri de Lorraine, Duc de Guise. I have also read Barclay's Argenis, a Latin Romance, and the best Romance that was ever written. All these, together with Madan's Letters to Priestly, and several pamphlets within these two months. So I am a great reader.

W. C.

LETTER LXXII.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Sept. 15, 1787.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

On Monday last I was invited to meet your friend Miss J——, at the Hall, and there we found her. Her good nature, her humourous manner, and her good sense are charming,

charming, insomuch that even I, who was never much addicted to speech-making, and who at present find myself particularly indisposed to it, could not help saying at parting, I am glad that I have seen you, and sorry that I have seen so little of you. We were sometimes many in company ; on Thursday we were fifteen, but we had not altogether so much vivacity and cleverness as Miss J—, whose talent at mirth-making has this rare property to recommend it, that nobody suffers by it.

I am making a gravel walk for winter use, under a warm hedge in the orchard. It shall be furnished with a low seat for your accommodation, and if you do but like it, I shall be satisfied. In wet weather, or rather after wet weather, when the street is dirty, it will suit you well, for lying on an easy declivity, through its whole length, it must of course be immediately dry.

You are very much wished for by our friends at the Hall—how much by me I will not tell you till the second week in October.

W. C.

LETTER LXXIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Sep. 29, 1787.

MY DEAR COZ.

I thank you for your political intelligence ; retired as we are, and seemingly excluded from the world,

we

we are not indifferent to what passes in it; on the contrary, the arrival of a news-paper, at the present juncture, never fails to furnish us with a theme for discussion, short indeed, but satisfactory, for we seldom differ in opinion.

I have received such an impression of the Turks, from the Memoirs of Baron de Tott, which I read lately, that I can hardly help presaging the conquest of that empire by the Russians. The disciples of Mahomet are such babies in modern tactics, and so enervated by the use of their favourite drug, so fatally secure in their predestinarian dream, and so prone to a spirit of mutiny against their leaders, that nothing less can be expected. In fact, they had not been their own masters at this day, had but the Russians known the weakness of their enemies half so well as they undoubtedly know it now. Add to this, that there is a popular prophecy current in both countries, that Turkey is one day to fall under the Russian sceptre. A prophecy, which from whatever authority it be derived, as it will naturally encourage the Russians, and dispirit the Turks, in exact proportion to the degree of credit it has obtained on both sides, has a direct tendency to effect its own accomplishment. In the mean time, if I wish them conquered, it is only because I think it will be a blessing to them to be governed by any other hand than their own. For under Heaven has there never been a throne so execrably tyrannical as theirs. The heads of the innocent that have been cut off to gratify the humour or caprice of
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their tyrants, could they be all collected, and discharged against the walls of their city, would not leave one stone on another.

Oh! that you were here this beautiful day! It is too fine by half to be spent in London. I have a perpetual din in my head, and though I am not deaf, hear nothing aright, neither my own voice, nor that of others. I am under a tub, from which tub accept my best love. Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXXIV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, Oct. 19, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

A summons from Johnson, which I received yesterday, calls my attention once more to the business of Translation. Before I begin I am willing to catch, though but a short opportunity, to acknowledge your last favour. The necessity of applying myself with all diligence to a long work that has been but too long interrupted, will make my opportunities of writing, rare in future,

Air and exercise are necessary to all men, but particularly so to the man whose mind labours, and to him who has been, all his life, accustomed to much of both, they are necessary in the extreme. My time, since we parted, has been devoted entirely to the

the recovery of health and strength for this service, and I am willing to hope with good effect. Ten months have passed since I discontinued my poetical efforts; I do not expect to find the same readiness as before, till exercise of the neglected faculty, such as it is, shall have restored it to me.

You find yourself, I hope, by this time, as comfortably situated in your new abode, as in a new abode one can be. I enter perfectly into all your feelings on occasion of the change. A sensible mind cannot do violence even to a local attachment, without much pain. When my Father died I was young, too young to have reflected much. He was Rector of Berkhamstead, and there I was born. It had never occurred to me that a parson has no fee-simple in the house and glebe he occupies. There was neither tree nor gate, nor stile, in all that country, to which I did not feel a relation, and the house itself I preferred to a palace. I was sent for from London to attend him in his last illness, and he died just before I arrived. Then, and not till then, I felt for the first time that I and my native place were disunited for ever. I sighed a long adieu to fields and woods, from which I once thought I should never be parted, and was at no time so sensible of their beauties as just when I left them all behind me, to return no more.

W. C.

LETTER

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LIFE OF COWPER.

LETTER LXXV.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Nov. 10, 1787.

The Parliament, my dearest Cousin, prorogued continually, is a meteor dancing before my eyes, promising me my wish only to disappoint me, and none but the King and his Ministers can tell when you and I shall come together. I hope, however, that the period, though so often postponed, is not far distant, and that once more I shall behold you, and experience your power to make winter gay and sprightly.

I have a Kitten, my dear, the drollest of all creatures that ever wore a cat's skin. Her gambols are not to be described, and would be incredible, if they could. In point of size she is likely to be a kitten always, being extremely small of her age, but time, I suppose, that spoils every thing, will make her also a cat. You will see her, I hope, before that melancholy period shall arrive, for no wisdom that she may gain by experience and reflection hereafter, will compensate the loss of her present hilarity. She is dressed in a tortoise-shell suit, and I know that you will delight in her.

Mrs. Throckmorton carries us to-morrow in her chaise to Chicheley. The event, however, must be supposed to depend on elements, at least on the state of the atmosphere, which is turbulent
beyond

beyond measure. Yesterday it thundered ; last night it lightened, and at three this morning I saw the sky as red as a city in flames could have made it. I have a Leech in a bottle that foretells all these prodigies and convulsions of nature. No, not as you will naturally conjecture, by articulate utterance of oracular notices, but by a variety of gesticulations, which here I have not room to give an account of. Suffice it to say, that no change of weather surprises him, and that in point of the earliest and most accurate intelligence, he is worth all the Barometers in the world—none of them all indeed can make the least pretence to foretell thunder—a species of capacity of which he has given the most unequivocal evidence. I gave but sixpence for him, which is a groat more than the market-price, though he is in fact, or rather would be, if Leeches were not found in every ditch, an invaluable acquisition.

W. C.

THE RETIRED CAT.*

*A Poet's Cat, sedate and grave,
As Poet well could wish to have,
Was much addicted to enquire
For nooks, to which she might retire,*

And

• NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

As the Kitten mentioned in this Letter was probably in her advanced life the Heroine of a little sportive moral Poem, it may be introduced perhaps not improperly here.

*And where secure as Mouse in chink,
 She might repose, or sit and think.
 I know not where she caught the trick—
 Nature perhaps herself had cast her
 In such a mould philosophique,
 Or else she learn'd it of her master.
 Sometimes ascending debonair,
 An apple-tree or lofty pear,
 Lodg'd with convenience in the fork,
 She watch'd the Gard'ner at his work;
 Sometimes her ease and solace sought
 In an old empty wat'ring pot,
 There wanting nothing, save a fan,
 To seem some nymph in her sedan,
 Apparell'd in exactest sort,
 And ready to be borne to court.*

*But love of change it seems has place
 Not only in our wiser race;
 Cats also feel as well as we
 That passion's force, and so did she.
 Her climbing she began to find
 Expos'd her too much to the wind,
 And the old utensil of tin
 Was cold and comfortless within:
 She therefore wish'd instead of those,
 Some place of more serene repose,
 Where neither cold might come, nor air
 Too rudely wanton with her hair.*

And

*And sought it in the likeliest mode
Within her master's snug abode.*

*A draw'r, it chanc'd, at bottom lin'd
With linen of the softest kind,
With such as merchants introduce
From India, for the lady's use,
A draw'r impending o'er the rest,
Half open in the top-most chest,
Of depth enough, and none to spare,
Invited her to slumber there.
Puss with delight beyond expression,
Survey'd the scene, and took possession.
Recumbent at her ease ere long,
And lull'd by her own hum-drum song,
She left the cares of life behind,
And slept as she would sleep her last,
When in came, housewifely inclin'd,
The Chambermaid, and shut it fast,
By no malignity impell'd,
But all unconscious whom it held.*

Awaken'd by the shock (cried Puss)
“ *Was ever Cat attended thus !*
“ *The open draw'r was left I see*
“ *Merely to prove a nest for me,*
“ *For soon as I was well compos'd,*
“ *Then came the maid, and it was clos'd :*

“ *How*

“ *How smooth these ’kerchiefs, and how sweet,*
 “ *Oh what a delicate retreat !*
 “ *I will resign myself to rest*
 “ *Till Sol, declining in the West,*
 “ *Shall call to supper ; when, no doubt,*
 “ *Susan will come and let me out.*

The evening came, the Sun descended,
And Puss remain’d still unattended.
The night roll’d tardily away,
(With her indeed ’twas never day)
The sprightly morn her course renew’d,
The evening grey again ensued,
And Puss came into mind no more
Than if entomb’d the day before.
With hunger pinch’d, and pinch’d for room,
She now presag’d approaching doom,
Nor slept a single wink, or purr’d,
Conscious of jeopardy incurr’d.

That night, by chance, the Poet watching,
Heard an inexplicable scratching,
His noble heart went pit-a-pat,
And to himself he said—“ What’s that ?”
He drew the curtain at his side,
And forth he peep’d, but nothing spied.
Yet, by his ear directed, guess’d,
Something imprison’d in the chest,

And

*And doubtful what, with prudent care,
Resolv'd it should continue there.
At length a voice, which well he knew,
A long and melancholy mew,
Saluting his poetic ears,
Consol'd him, and dispell'd his fears ;
He left his bed, he trod the floor,
He 'gan in haste the draw'rs explore,
The lowest first, and without stop,
The rest in order to the top.
For 'tis a truth, well known to most,
That whatsoever thing is lost,
We seek it, ere it come to light,
In ev'ry cranny but the right.
Forth skipp'd the Cat ; not now replete
As erst with airy self-conceit,
Nor in her own fond apprehension,
A theme for all the world's attention,
But modest, sober, cur'd of all
Her notions hyperbolical,
And wishing for a place of rest
Any thing rather than a chest,
Then stept the Poet into bed,
With this reflection in his head.*

MORAL.

MORAL.

*Beware of too sublime a sense
Of your own worth and consequence !
The man who dreams himself so great,
And his importance of such weight,
That all around, in all that's done,
Must move and act for him alone,
Will learn, in school of tribulation,
The folly of his expectation.*

LETTER LXXVI.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Nov. 16, 1787.

I thank you for the solicitude that you express on the subject of my present studies. The work is undoubtedly long and labourious, but it has an end, and proceeding leisurely, with a due attention to the use of air and exercise, it is possible that I may live to finish it. Assure yourself of one thing, that though to a bystander it may seem an occupation surpassing the powers of a constitution, never very athletic, and, at present, not a little the worse for wear, I can invent for myself no employment that does not exhaust my spirits more. I will not pretend to account for this, I will only say, that it is not the language of predilection

dilection for a favourite amusement, but that the fact is really so. I have even found that those plaything-avocations which one may execute almost without any attention, fatigue me, and wear me away, while such as engage me much, and attach me closely, are rather serviceable to me than otherwise.

W. C.

LETTER LXXVII.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Nov. 27, 1787.

It is the part of wisdom, my dearest Cousin, to sit down contented under the demands of necessity, because they are such. I am sensible that you cannot, in my Uncle's present infirm state, and of which it is not possible to expect any considerable amendment, indulge either of us, or yourself, with a journey to Weston. Yourself, I say, both because I know it will give you pleasure to see *Causidice mi** once more, especially in the comfortable abode where you have placed him, and because after so long an imprisonment in London, you, who love the country, and have a taste for it, would of course be glad to return to it. For my own part, to me it is ever new, and though I have now been an inhabitant of this village a twelvemonth, and have during the half of that time been at liberty to expatiate, and to make discoveries, I am daily finding out fresh scenes and walks, which you

L L 2

would

* The Apellation which Sir Thomas Hesketh used to give him in jest, when he was of the Temple.

would never be satisfied with enjoying—some of them are unapproachable by you either on foot or in your carriage. Had you twenty toes (whereas I suppose you have but ten) you could not reach them; and coach-wheels have never been seen there since the flood. Before it indeed, (as Burnet says, that the earth was then perfectly free from all inequalities in its surface) they might be seen there every day. We have other walks both upon hill tops, and in vallies beneath, some of which by the help of your carriage, and many of them without its help, would be always at your command.

On Monday morning last, Sam brought me word that there was a man in the kitchen who desired to speak with me. I ordered him in. A plain, decent, elderly figure made its appearance, and being desired to sit, spoke as follows: “Sir, I am Clerk of the parish of “All-Saints in Northampton; brother of Mr. C. the Upholsterer. It “is customary for the person in my office to annex to a Bill of “Mortality which he publishes at Christmas, a copy of Verses. “You would do me a great favour, Sir, if you would furnish me “with one.” To this I replied, “Mr. C. you have several men of “genius in your town, why have you not applied to some of “them? There is a namesake of yours in particular, C—, the Statuary, who, every body knows, is a first-rate maker of verses. He “surely is the man of all the world for your purpose.” “Alas! Sir, “I have heretofore borrowed help from him, but he is a gentle-
“man

"man of so much reading, that the people of our town cannot understand him." I confess to you, my dear, I felt all the force of the compliment implied in this speech, and was almost ready to answer, perhaps, my good friend, they may find me unintelligible too for the same reason. . . But on asking him whether he had walked over to Weston on purpose to implore the assistance of my Muse, and on his replying in the affirmative, I felt my mortified vanity a little consoled, and pitying the poor man's distress, which appeared to be considerable, promised to supply him. The waggon has accordingly gone this day to Northampton loaded in part with my effusions in the mortuary stile. A fig for Poets who write epitaphs upon individuals! I have written *one*, that serves *two hundred persons*,

A few days since I received a second very obliging Letter from Mr. M——. He tells me that his own papers, which are, by far, he is sorry to say it, the most numerous, are marked V. I. Z. Accordingly, my dear, I am happy to find that I am engaged in a correspondence with Mr. Viz, a gentleman for whom I have always entertained the profoundest veneration. But the serious fact is, that the papers distinguished by those signatures, have ever pleased the most, and struck me as the work of a sensible man, who knows the world well, and has more of Addison's delicate humour than any body.

A poor

A poor man begged food at the Hall lately. The Cook gave him some Vermicelli soup. He ladled it about some time with the spoon, and then returned it to her saying, "I am a poor man it is true, and I am very hungry, but yet I cannot eat broth with maggots in it." Once more, my dear, a thousand thanks for your box full of good things, useful things, and beautiful things.

Ever yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXXVIII.

To Lady HESKETH,

The Lodge, Dec. 4, 1787:

I am glad my dearest Coz. that my last Letter proved so diverting. You may assure yourself of the literal truth of the whole narration, and that however droll, it was not in the least indebted to any embellishments of mine.

You say well, my dear, that in Mr. Throckmorton we have a peerless neighbour, we have so: In point of information upon all important subjects, in respect too, of expression and address, and in short, every thing that enters into the idea of a gentleman, I have not found his equal, (not often) any where. Were I asked, who in my judgment approaches the nearest to him, in all his amiable qualities, and qualifications, I should certainly answer, his brother George, who if he be not his exact counterpart, endued with

with precisely the same measure, of the same accomplishments, is nevertheless deficient in none of them, and is of a character singularly agreeable, in respect of a certain manly, I had almost said, heroic frankness, with which his air strikes one almost immediately. So far as his opportunities have gone, he has ever been as friendly and obliging to us, as we could wish him; and where he Lord of the Hall to-morrow, would I dare say, conduct himself toward us in such a manner, as to leave us as little sensible as possible, of the removal of its present owners. But all this I say, my dear, merely for the sake of stating the matter as it is; not in order to obviate, or, to prove the inexpediency of any future plans of yours, concerning the place of our residence. Providence and time, shape every thing, I should rather say Providence alone, for time has often no hand in the wonderful changes that we experience; they take place in a moment. It is not therefore worth while perhaps to consider much what we will, or will not do in years to come; concerning which all that I can say with certainty at present, is, that those years will be to me the most welcome, in which I can see the most of you.

W. C.

LETTER LXXIX.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec, 10, 1787.

I thank you for the snip of cloth, commonly called a pattern. At present I have two coats, and but one back.

If

If at any time hereafter I should find myself possessed of fewer coats, or more backs, it will be of use to me.

Even as you suspect, my dear, so it proved. The ball was prepared for, the ball was held, and the ball passed, and we had nothing to do with it. Mrs. Throckmorton knowing our trim, did not give us the pain of an invitation, for a pain it would have been. And why? as Sternhold says—because, as Hopkins answers, we must have refused it. But it fell out singularly enough, that this ball was held of all days in the year, on my birth-day—and so I told them—but not till it was all over.

Though I have thought proper never to take any notice of the arrival of my mss. together with the *other good things* in the box, yet certain it is that I received them, I have furbished up the tenth **Book** till it is as bright as silver, and am now occupied in bestowing the same labour upon the eleventh. The twelfth and thirteenth are in the hands of ———, and the fourteenth and fifteenth are ready to succeed them. This notable job is the delight of my heart, and how sorry shall I be when it is ended,

The Smith and the Carpenter, my dear, are both in the room hanging a bell, if I therefore make a thousand blunders, let the said intruders answer for them all.

I thank you, my dear, for your history of the G—s. What changes in that family! And how many thousand families have in
the

the same time experienced changes as violent as theirs! The course of a rapid river is the justest of all emblems to express the variable-ness of our scene below. Shakespeare says, none ever bathed himself twice in the same stream, and it is equally true, that the world upon which we close our eyes at night, is never the same with that on which we open them in the morning.

I do not always say, give my love to my Uncle, because he knows that I always love him. I do not always present Mrs. Unwin's love to you, partly for the same reason (deuce take the Smith and the Carpenter) and partly because I sometimes forget it. But to present my own, I forget never, for I always have to finish my Letter, which I know not how to do, my dearest Coz. without telling you, that I am ever yours.

W. C.

 LETTER LXXX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, Dec. 13, 1787.

Unless my memory deceives me, I forewarned you that I should prove a very unpunctual correspondent. The Work that lies before me, engages unavoidably my whole attention. The length of it, the spirit of it, and the exactness that is requisite to its due performance, are so many most in-

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teresting

interesting subjects of consideration to me, who find that my best attempts are only introductory to others, and that what to-day I suppose finished, to-morrow I must begin again. Thus it fares with a Translator of Homer. To exhibit the majesty of such a Poet in a modern language, is a task that no man can estimate the difficulty of till he attempts it. To paraphrase him loosely, to hang him with trappings that do not belong to him, all this is comparatively easy. But to represent him with only his own ornaments, and still to preserve his dignity, is a labour that, if I hope in any measure to achieve it, I am sensible can only be achieved by the most assiduous, and most unremitting attention. Our studies, however different in themselves, in respect of the means by which they are to be successfully carried on, bear some resemblance to each other. A perseverance that nothing can discourage, a minuteness of observation that suffers nothing to escape, and a determination not to be seduced from the strait line that lies before us, by any images with which fancy may present us, are essentials that should be common to us both. There are, perhaps, few arduous undertakings that are not in fact more arduous than we at first supposed them. As we proceed, difficulties increase upon us, but our hopes gather strength also, and we conquer difficulties which could we have foreseen them, we should never have had the boldness to encounter. May this be your experience, as I doubt not that it will. You possess by nature all that is necessary to success in the profession that you have chosen. What remains is in your own power.

power. They say of poets that they must be born such : so must mathematicians, so must great generals, and so must lawyers, and so indeed must men of all denominations, or it is not possible that they should excel. But with whatever faculties we are born, and to whatever studies our genius may direct us, studies they must still be. I am persuaded that Milton did not write his *Paradise Lost*, nor Homer his *Iliad*, nor Newton his *Principia*, without immense labour. Nature gave them a bias to their respective pursuits, and that strong propensity, I suppose, is what we mean by genius. The rest they gave themselves. “*Macte esto*,” therefore have no fears for the issue !

I have had a second kind Letter from your friend Mr. ———, which I have just answered. I must not I find hope to see him here, at least I must not much expect it. He has a family that does not permit him to fly Southward. I have also a notion that we three could spend a few days comfortably together, especially in a country like this, abounding in scenes with which I am sure you would both be delighted. Having lived till lately at some distance from the spot that I now inhabit, and having never been master of any sort of vehicle whatever, it is but just now that I begin myself to be acquainted with the beauties of our situation. To you I may hope one time or other to show them, and shall be happy to do it when an opportunity offers.

Yours, most affectionately.

W. C.

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LETTER

LETTER LXXXI.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 1, 1788.

Now for another story almost incredible! A story, that would be quite such, if it was not certain that you give me credit for any thing. I have read the Poem for the sake of which you sent the paper, and was much entertained by it. You think it perhaps, as very well you may, the only piece of that kind that was ever produced. It is indeed original, for I dare say Mr. Merry never saw mine; but certainly it is not unique. For most true it is, my dear, that ten years since, having a Letter to write to a friend of mine, to whom I could write any thing, I filled a whole sheet with a composition, both in measure and in manner, precisely similar. I have in vain searched for it. It is either burnt or lost. Could I have found it, you would have had double postage to pay. For that one man in Italy, and another in England, who never saw each other, should stumble on a species of verse, in which no other man ever wrote (and I believe that to be the case) and upon a stile and manner too, of which I suppose that neither of them had ever seen an example, appears to me so extraordinary a fact, that I must have sent you mine, whatever it had cost you, and am really vexed that I cannot authenticate the story by producing a voucher. The measure I recollect to have been perfectly

fectly the same, and as to the manner I am equally sure of that, and from this circumstance, that Mrs. Unwin and I never laughed more at any production of mine, perhaps not even at John Gilpin: But for all this, my dear, you must, as I said, give me credit; for the thing itself is gone to that Limbo of vanity, where alone, says Milton, things lost on earth are to be met with. Said Limbo is, as you know, in the Moon, whither I could not at present convey myself without a good deal of difficulty and inconvenience.

This morning being the morning of New Year's Day, I sent to the Hall, a copy of Verses, addressed to Mrs. Throckmorton, entitled, The Wish, or the Poet's New Year's Gift. We dine there to-morrow, when, I suppose, I shall hear news of them. Their kindness is so great, and they seize with such eagerness every opportunity of doing all they think will please us, that I held myself almost in duty bound to treat them with this stroke of my profession.

The small-pox has done, I believe, all that it has to do at Weston. Old folks, and even women with child, have been inoculated. We talk of our freedom, and some of us are free enough, but not the Poor. Dependent as they are upon 'parish bounty, they are sometimes obliged to submit to impositions which, perhaps, in France itself, could hardly be paralleled. Can man or woman be said to be free, who is commanded to take a distemper, sometimes at least mortal, and in circumstances most likely to make it so?

so? No circumstance whatever was permitted to exempt the inhabitants of Weston. The old as well as the young, and the pregnant as well as they who had only themselves within them, have been inoculated. Were I asked who is the most arbitrary sovereign on earth? I should answer, neither the King of France, nor the Grand Signior, but an Overseer of the Poor in England.

I am as heretofore occupied with Homer: my present occupation is the revisal of all I have done, viz. of the first fifteen Books. I stand amazed at my own increasing dexterity in the business, being verily persuaded that as far as I have gone, I have improved the Work to double its former value.

That you may begin the new year, and end it in all health and happiness, and many more when the present shall have been long an old one, is the ardent wish of Mrs. Unwin, and of yours, my dearest Coz. most cordially,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXII.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 19, 1788.

When I have prose enough to fill my paper, which is always the case when I write to you, I cannot find in my heart to give a third part of it to verse. Yet this I must do,

do, or I must make my pacquets more costly than worshipful, by doubling the postage upon you, which I should hold to be unreasonable. See then, the true reason why I did not send you that same scribblement till you desired it. The thought which naturally presents itself to me on all such occasions is this, Is not your Cousin coming? Why are you impatient? Will it not be time enough to shew her your fine things when she arrives?

Fine things indeed I have few. He who has Homer to transcribe may well be contented to do little else. As when an Ass being harnessed with ropes to a sand cart, drags with hanging ears his heavy burthen, neither filling the long echoing streets with his harmonious bray, nor throwing up his heels behind, frolicksome and airy, as Asses less engaged are wont to do; so I, satisfied to find myself indispensibly obliged to render into the best possible English metre, eight and forty Greek Books, of which the two finest Poems in the world consist, account it quite sufficient if I may at last achieve that labour, and seldom allow myself those pretty little vagaries in which I should otherwise delight, and of which if I should live long enough, I intend hereafter to enjoy my fill.

This is the reason, my dear Cousin, if I may be permitted to call you so in the same breath with which I have uttered this truly heroic comparison; this is the reason why I produce at present but few occasional Poems, and the preceding reason is, that which

may

may account satisfactorily enough for my withholding the very few that I do produce. A thought sometimes strikes me before I rise ; if it runs readily into verse, and I can finish it before breakfast, it is well ; otherwise it dies, and is forgotten ; for all the subsequent hours are devoted to Homer.

The day before yesterday, I saw, for the first time, Bunbury's new Print, The Propagation of a Lie. Mr. Throckmorton sent it for the amusement of our party. Bunbury sells humour by the yard, and is I suppose the first vender of it who ever did so. He cannot therefore be said to have humour without measure (pardon a pun, my dear, from a man who has not made one before these forty years) though he may certainly be said to be immeasurably droll.

The original thought is good, and the exemplification of it in those very expressive figures, admirable. A Poem on the same subject, displaying all that is displayed in those attitudes, and in those features, (for faces they can hardly be called) would be most excellent. The affinity of the two arts, viz. Verse and Painting, has been often observed ; possibly the happiest illustration of it would be found, if some Poet would ally himself to some Draftsman, as Bunbury, and undertake to write every thing he should draw. Then let a Musician be admitted of the party. He should compose
the

said poem, adapting notes to it exactly accommodated to the theme; so should the sister arts be proved to be indeed sisters, and the world would die of laughing.

W. C.

LETTER LXXXIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 30, 1788.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

It is a fortnight since I heard from you, that is to say, a week longer than you have accustomed me to wait for a Letter. I do not forget that you have recommended it to me, on occasions somewhat similar, to banish all anxiety, and to ascribe your silence only to the interruptions of company. Good advice, my dear, but not easily taken by a man circumstanced as I am. I have learned in the school of adversity, a school from which I have no expectation that I shall ever be dismissed, to apprehend the worst, and have ever found it the only course in which I can indulge myself without the least danger of incurring a disappointment. This kind of experience, continued through many years, has given me such an habitual bias to the gloomy side of every thing, that I never have a moment's ease on any subject to which I am not indifferent. How then can I be easy when I am left afloat upon a sea of endless conjectures, of which you furnish

the occasion. Write, I beseech you, and do not forget that I am now a battered actor upon this turbulent stage. That what little vigour of mind I ever had, of the self-supporting kind I mean, has long since been broken, and that though I can bear nothing well, yet any thing better than a state of ignorance concerning your welfare. I have spent hours in the night leaning upon my elbow, and wondering what your silence means. I intreat you once more to put an end to these speculations, which cost me more animal spirits than I can spare; if you cannot without great trouble to yourself, which in your situation may very possibly be the case, contrive opportunities of writing so frequently as usual, only say it, and I am content. I will wait, if you desire it, as long for every Letter, but then let them arrive at the period once fixed, exactly at the time, for my patience will not hold out an hour beyond it.

W. C.

LETTER LXXXIV.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 1, 1788.

Pardon me, my dearest Cousin, the mournful ditty that I sent you last. There are times when I see every thing through a medium that distresses me, to an insupportable degree, and that Letter was written in one of them. A fog
that

that had for three days obliterated all the beauties of Weston, and a north-east wind, might possibly contribute not a little to the melancholy that indited it. But my mind is now easy; your Letter has made it so, and I feel myself as blithe as a bird in comparison. I love you, my Cousin, and cannot suspect, either with or without cause, the least evil in which you may be concerned, without being greatly troubled. Oh trouble! the portion of all mortals—but mine in particular. Would I had never known thee, or could bid thee farewell for ever; for I meet thee at every turn, my pillows are stuffed with thee, my very roses smell of thee, and even my Cousin, who would cure me of all trouble, if she could, is sometimes innocently the cause of trouble to me.

I now see the unreasonableness of my late trouble, and would, if I could trust myself so far, promise never again to trouble either myself or you in the same manner, unless warranted by some more substantial ground of apprehension.

What I said concerning Homer, my dear, was spoken, or rather written, merely under the influence of a certain jocularly that I felt at that moment. I am in reality so far from thinking myself an Ass, and my Translation a sand-cart, that I rather seem in my own account of the matter, one of those flaming steeds harnessed to the chariot of Apollo, of which we read in the works of the antients. I have lately, I know not how, acquired a certain supe-

riority to myself in this business, and in this last revisal have elevated the expression to a degree far surpassing its former boast. A few evenings since I had an opportunity to try how far I might venture to expect such success of my labours as can alone repay them, by reading the first Book of my Iliad to a friend of ours. He dined with you once at Olney. His name is Greatheed, a man of letters, and of taste. He dined with us, and the evening proving dark and dirty, we persuaded him to take a bed.

I entertained him as I tell you. He heard me with great attention, and with evident symptoms of the highest satisfaction, which when I had finished the exhibition, he put out of all doubt by expressions which I cannot repeat. Only this he said to Mrs. Unwin, while I was in another room, that he had never entered into the spirit of Homer before, nor had any thing like a due conception of his manner. This I have said, knowing that it will please you, and will now say no more.

Adieu! my dear, will you never speak of coming to Weston more?

W. C.

LETTER LXXXV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

MY DEAR SIR,

The Lodge, Feb. 14, 1788.

Though it be long since I received your last, I have not yet forgotten the impression it made upon me,
nor

nor how sensibly I felt myself obliged by your unreserved and friendly communications. I will not apologize for my silence in the interim, because apprized as you are of my present occupation, the excuse that I might alledge will present itself to you of course, and to dilate upon it would therefore be waste of paper.

You are in possession of the best security imaginable, for the due improvement of your time, which is a just sense of its value. Had I been, when at your age, as much affected by that important consideration, as I am at present, I should not have devoted, as I did, all the earliest part of my life to amusement only. I am now in the predicament into which the thoughtlessness of youth betrays nine-tenths of mankind, who never discover that the health and good-spirits which generally accompany it, are in reality blessings only according to the use we make of them, till advanced years begin to threaten them with the loss of both. How much wiser would thousands have been, than now they ever will be, had a puny constitution, or some occasional infirmity, constrained them to devote those hours to study and reflection, which for want of some such check, they have given entirely to dissipation! I, therefore, account you happy, who, young as you are, need not to be informed that you cannot always be so, and who already know that the materials upon which age can alone build its comfort, should be brought together at an earlier period. You have indeed, losing a father, lost a friend, but you have not lost his instructions. His
example

example was not buried with him, but happily for/you (happily because you are desirous to avail yourself of it) still lives in your remembrance, and is cherished in your best affections.

Your last Letter was dated from the house of a gentleman, who was, I believe, my school-fellow, for the Mr. C——, who lived at Watford, while I had any connexion with Hartfordshire, must have been the father of the present, and according to his age, and the state of his health, when I saw him last, must have been long dead. I never was acquainted with the family further than by report, which always spoke honourably of them, though in all my journies to and from my Father's, I must have passed the door. The circumstance however reminds me of the beautiful reflection of Glaucus in the sixth Iliad; beautiful as well for the affecting nature of the observation, as for the jutness of the comparison, and the incomparable simplicity of the expression. I feel that I shall not be satisfied without transcribing it, and yet perhaps *my* Greek may be difficult to decypher.

ΟΙΗ ΠΕΡ ΦΥΛΛΩΝ ΓΕΝΕΗ, ΤΟΙΗΔΕ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΔΡΩΝ.

ΦΥΛΛΑ ΤΑ ΜΕΝ Τ' ΑΝΕΜΟΣ ΧΑΜΑΔΙΣ ΧΕΕΙ, ΑΛΛΑ ΔΕ Θ' ΟΥΛΗ

ΤΗΛΕΘΩΣΤΑ ΦΥΕΙ, ΕΑΡΟΣ Δ' ΕΠΙΓΙΓΝΕΤΑΙ ΩΡΗ;

ΩΣ ΑΝΔΡΩΝ ΓΕΝΕΗ, Η ΜΕΝ ΦΥΕΙ, Η Δ' ΑΠΟΛΗΓΕΙ.

Excuse this piece of pedantry in a man whose Homer is always before him! What would I give that he were living now, and within my reach! I, of all men living, have the best excuse for indulging

ing such a wish, unreasonable as it may seem, for I have no doubt that the fire of his eye, and the smile of his lips, would put me now and then in possession of his full meaning more effectually than any commentator. I return you many thanks for the Elegies which you sent me, both which I think deserving of much commendation. I should requite you but ill by sending you my mortuary Verses, neither at present can I prevail on myself to do it, having no frank, and being conscious that they are not worth carriage without one. I have one copy left, and that copy I will keep for you.

W. C.

LETTER LXXXVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 16, 1788.

I have now three Letters of yours, my dearest Cousin, before me, all written in the space of a week, and must be indeed insensible of kindness did I not feel yours on this occasion. I cannot describe to you, neither could you comprehend it if I should, the manner in which my mind is sometimes impressed with melancholy on particular subjects. You late silence was such a subject. I heard, saw, and felt, a thousand terrible things, which had no real existence, and was haunted by them night and day till they at last extorted from me the doleful epistle which I have since wished had been burned before I sent it.

Bu

But the cloud has passed, and, as far as you are concerned, my heart is once more at rest.

Before you gave me the hint, I had once or twice, as I lay on my bed, watching the break of day, ruminated on the subject which, in your last but one, you recommended to me.

Slavery, or a release from slavery, such as the poor Negroes have endured, or perhaps both these topics together, appeared to me a theme so important at the present juncture, and at the same time so susceptible of poetical management, that I more than once perceived myself ready to start in that career, could I have allowed myself to desert Homer for so long a time as it would have cost me to do them justice.

While I was pondering these things, the public prints informed me that Miss More was on the point of publication, having actually finished what I had not yet begun.

The sight of her advertisement convinced me, that my best course would be that to which I felt myself most inclined, to persevere without turning aside to attend to any other call, however alluring, in the business I have in hand.

It occurred to me likewise, that I have already borne my testimony in favour of my Black brethren, and that I was one of the
earliest,

earliest, if not the first of those who have in the present day, expressed their detestation of the diabolical traffic in question.

On all these accounts I judged it best to be silent, and especially because I cannot doubt that some effectual measures will now be taken to alleviate the miseries of their condition, the whole nation being in possession of the case, and it being impossible also to alledge an argument in behalf of man merchandize that can deserve a hearing. I shall be glad to see Hannah More's Poem ; she is a favourite writer with me, and has more nerve and energy both in her thoughts and language than half the he rhymers in the kingdom. The Thoughts on the Manners of the Great will likewise be most acceptable. I want to learn as much of the world as I can, but to acquire that learning at a distance, and a book with such a title promises fair to serve the purpose effectually,

I recommend it to you, my dear, by all means to embrace the fair occasion, and to put yourself in the way of being squeezed and incommoded a few hours, for the sake of hearing and seeing what you will never have opportunity to see and hear hereafter, the trial of a man who has been greater, and more feared, than the Great Mogul himself. Whatever we are at home, we have certainly been tyrants in the East, and if these men have, as they are charged, rioted in the miseries of the innocent, and dealt death to the guiltless, with an unsparing hand, may they receive a retribution that shall in future make all governors and judges of ours,

in those distant regions, tremble. While I speak thus, I equally wish them acquitted. They were both my school-fellows, and for Hastings I had a particular value. Farewell.

W. C.

LETTER LXXXVII.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 22, 1788.

I do not wonder that your ears and feelings were hurt by Mr. Burke's severe invective. But you are to know, my dear, or probably you know it already, that the prosecution of public delinquents has always, and in all countries, been thus conducted. The stile of a criminal charge of this kind has been an affair settled among orators from the days of Tully, to the present, and like all other practices that have obtained for ages, this, in particular, seems to have been founded originally in reason, and in the necessity of the case.

He who accuses another to the state, must not appear himself unmoved by the view of crimes with which he charges him, least he should be suspected of fiction, or of precipitancy, or of a consciousness that after all he shall not be able to prove his allegations. On the contrary, in order to impress the minds of his hearers with a persuasion that he himself at least is convinced of the criminality of the prisoner, he must be vehement, energetic, rapid; must call

call him tyrant, and traitor, and every thing else that is odious, and all this to his face, because all this, bad as it is, is no more than he undertakes to prove in the sequel, and if he cannot prove it he must himself appear in a light very little more desirable, and at the best to have trifled with the tribunal to which he has summoned him.

Thus Tully in the very first sentence of his first oration against Cataline, calls him a monster ; a manner of address in which he persisted till said monster, unable to support the fury of his accuser's eloquence any longer, rose from his seat, elbowed for himself a passage through the crowd, and at last burst from the senate house in an agony, as if the Furies themselves had followed him.

And now, my dear, though I have thus spoken, and have seemed to plead the cause of that species of eloquence which you, and every creature who has your sentiments, must necessarily dislike, perhaps I am not altogether convinced of its propriety. Perhaps, at the bottom, I am much more of opinion, that if the charge, unaccompanied by any inflammatory matter, and simply detailed, being once delivered into the court, and read aloud ; the witnesses were immediately examined, and sentence pronounced according to the evidence, not only the process would be shortened, much time and much expence saved, but justice would have at least as fair play as now she has. Prejudice is of no use in weighing the question—Guilty or not guilty—and the principal aim, end, and

effect of such introductory harangues is to create as much prejudice as possible. When you and I, therefore, shall have the whole and sole management of such a business entrusted to us, we will order it otherwise.

I was glad to learn from the papers that our Cousin Henry shone as he did in reading the charge. This must have given much pleasure to the General.

Thy ever affectionate,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXVIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, March 3, 1788.

One day last week, Mrs. Unwin and I having taken our morning walk, and returning homeward through the wilderness, met the Throckmortons. A minute after we had met them, we heard the cry of Hounds at no great distance, and mounting the broad stump of an elm, which had been felled, and by the aid of which we were enabled to look over the wall, we saw them. 'They were all that time in our orchard: presently we heard a Terrier, belonging to Mrs. Throckmorton, which you may remember by the name of Fury, yelping with much vehemence, and saw her running through the thickets within a few yards of us at her utmost speed, as if in pursuit of something which

which we doubted not was the Fox. Before we could reach the other end of the wilderness, the Hounds entered also; and when we arrived at the gate which opens into the grove, there we found the whole weary cavalcade assembled. The Huntsman dismounting, begged leave to follow his Hounds on foot, for he was sure he said that they had killed him. A conclusion which I suppose he drew from their profound silence. He was accordingly admitted, and with a sagacity that would not have dishonoured the best Hound in the world, pursuing precisely the same track which the Fox and the Dogs had taken, though he had never had a glimpse of either after their first entrance through the rails, arrived where he found the slaughtered prey. He soon produced dead Reynard, and rejoined us in the grove with all his Dogs about him. Having an opportunity to see a ceremony, which I was pretty sure would never fall in my way again, I determined to stay, and to notice all that passed with the most minute attention. The Huntsman having by the aid of a pitchfork lodged Reynard on the arm of an elm, at the height of about nine feet from the ground, there left him for a considerable time. The gentlemen sat on their horses contemplating the Fox, for which they had toiled so hard; and the Hounds assembled at the foot of the tree, with faces not less expressive of the most rational delight, contemplated the same object. The Huntsman remounted; he cut off a foot, and threw it to the Hounds—one of them swallowed it whole like a bolus. He then once more alighted, and drawing down the Fox by the hinder legs,

legs, desired the people, who were by this time rather numerous, to open a lane for him to the right and left. He was instantly obeyed, when throwing the Fox to the distance of some yards, and screaming like a Fiend, "tear him to pieces"—at least six times repeatedly, he consigned him over absolutely to the pack, who in a few minutes devoured him completely. Thus, my dear, as Virgil says, what none of the Gods could have ventured to promise me, time itself, pursuing its accustomed course, has of its own accord presented me with, I have been in at the death of a Fox, and you now know as much of the matter as I, who am as well informed as any sportsman in England.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXIX.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, March 12, 1788.

Slavery, and the Manners of the Great, I have read. The former I admired, as I do all that Miss More writes, as well for energy of expression, as for the tendency of the design. I have never yet seen any production of her pen that has not recommended itself by both these qualifications. There is likewise much good sense in her manner of treating every subject, and no mere poetic cant (which is the thing that I abhor,) in her manner of treating any. And this I say, not because you now know
and

and visit her, but it has long been my avowed opinion of her works, which I have both spoken and written as often as I have had occasion to mention them.

Mr. Wilberforce's little book (if he was the author of it) has also charmed me. It must, I should imagine, engage the notice of those to whom it is addressed. In that case one may say to them, either answer it, or be set down by it. They will do neither. They will approve, commend, and forget it. Such has been the fate of all exhortations to reform, whether in verse or prose, and however closely pressed upon the conscience in all ages, here and there a happy individual, to whom God gives grace and wisdom to profit by the admonition, is the better for it. But the aggregate body (as Gilbert Cooper used to call the multitude) remain, though with a very good understanding of the matter, like horse and mule that have none.

We shall now soon lose our neighbours at the Hall. We shall truly miss them, and long for their return. Mr. Throckmorton said to me last night, with sparkling eyes, and a face expressive of the highest pleasure, "We compared you this morning with Pope; we read your fourth Iliad, and his, and I verily think we shall beat him. He has many superfluous lines, and does not interest one. When I read your Translation, I am deeply affected. I see plainly your advantage, and am convinced that Pope spoiled all by attempting

tempting the work in rhyme." His brother George, who is my most active amanuensis, and who indeed first introduced the subject, seconded all he said. More would have passed, but Mrs. Throckmorton having seated herself at the harpsichord, and for my amusement merely, my attention was of course turned to her. The new Vicar of Olney is arrived, and we have exchanged visits. He is a plain, sensible man, and pleases me much. A treasure for Olney, if Olney can understand his value. Adieu,

W. C.

LETTER XC.

To General COWPER.

Weston, Dec: 13, 1787.

MY DEAR GENERAL,

A Letter is not pleasant which excites curiosity, but does not gratify it. Such a Letter was my last, the defects of which I therefore take the first opportunity to supply. When the condition of our Negroes in the Islands was first presented to me as a subject for Songs, I felt myself not at all allured to the undertaking; it seemed to offer only images of horror, which could by no means be accommodated to the style of that sort of composition. But having a desire to comply, if possible, with the request made to me, after turning the matter in my mind as many ways as I could, I at last, as I told you, produced
three,

three, and that which appears to myself the best of those three, I have sent you. Of the other two, one is serious, in a strain of thought perhaps rather too serious, and I could not help it. The other, of which the Slave Trader is himself the subject, is somewhat ludicrous. If I could think them worth your seeing, I would, as opportunity should occur, send them also. If this amuses you I shall be glad.

W. C.

THE MORNING DREAM.*

A BALLAD.

To the Tune of Tweed-side.

*'Twas in the glad season of spring,
 Asleep at the dawn of the day,
 I dream'd what I cannot but sing,
 So pleasant it seem'd as I lay.
 I dream'd that on ocean afloat,
 Far hence to the Westward I sail'd,
 While the billows high lifted the boat,
 And the fresh blowing breeze never fail'd,*

In

VOL. I.

P P

* The excellence of this Ballad induces me to reprint it here, although it has appeared in the last edition of Cowper's Poems.

*In the steerage a woman I saw,
Such at least was the form that she wore,
Whose beauty impress'd me with awe,
Never taught me by woman before.
She sat, and a shield at her side
Shed light like a sun on the waves,
And smiling divinely, she cry'd—
"I go to make Freemen of Slaves."*

*Then raising her voice to a strain,
The sweetest that ear ever heard,
She sung of the Slave's broken chain,
Wherever her glory appear'd.
Some clouds which had over us hung
Fled, chas'd by her melody clear,
And methought while she Liberty sung,
'Twas Liberty only to hear.*

*Thus swiftly dividing the flood,
To a Slave-cultur'd island we came,
Where a Demon, her enemy stood,
Oppression, his terrible name.
In his hand, as a sign of his sway,
A scourge hung with lashes he bore,
And stood looking out for his prey,
From Africa's sorrowful shore.*

But

*But soon as approaching the land,
 That goddess-like woman he view'd,
 The scourge he let fall from his hand,
 With blood of his subjects imbru'd.
 I saw him both sicken and die,
 And the moment the monster expir'd
 Heard shouts that ascended the sky,
 From thousands with rapture inspir'd.*

*Awaking, how could I but muse,
 At what such a dream should betide?
 But soon my ear caught the glad news
 Which serv'd my weak thought for a guide—
 That Britannia, renown'd o'er the waves,
 For the hatred she ever has shown
 To the black-sceptred rulers of Slaves,
 Resolves to have none of her own.*

LETTER XCI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, March 29, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I rejoice that you have so successfully performed so long a journey without the aid of hoofs or wheels. I do not know that a journey on foot exposes a man to more disasters than a carriage or a horse ; perhaps it may be the safer way of travelling, but the novelty of it impressed me with some anxiety on your account.

P P 2

It

It seems almost incredible to myself, that my company should be at all desirable to you, or to any man. I know so little of the world as it goes at present, and labour generally under such a depression of spirits, especially at those times when I could wish to be most cheerful, that my own share in every conversation appears to me to be the most insipid thing imaginable. But you say you found it otherwise, and I will not for my own sake doubt your sincerity, *de gustibus non est disputandum*, and since such is yours, I shall leave you in quiet possession of it, wishing indeed both its continuance and increase. I shall not find a properer place in which to say, accept of Mrs. Unwin's acknowledgments, as well as mine, for the kindness of your expressions on this subject, and be assured of an undissembling welcome at all times, when it shall suit you to give us your company at Weston. As to her, she is one of the sincerest of the human race, and if she receives you with the appearance of pleasure, it is because she feels it. Her behaviour on such occasions is with her an affair of conscience, and she dares no more look a falsehood than utter one.

It is almost time to tell you, that I have received the books safe; they have not suffered the least detriment by the way, and I am much obliged to you for them. If my Translation should be a little delayed in consequence of this favour of yours, you must take the blame on yourself. It is impossible not to read the notes
of

of a Commentator so learned, so judicious, and of so fine a taste as Dr. Clarke, having him at one's elbow. Though he has been but few hours under my roof I have already peeped at him, and find that he will be *instar omnium* to me. They are such Notes exactly as I wanted. A translator of Homer should ever have somebody at hand to say, "that's a beauty," least he should slumber where his author does not, not only depreciating, by such inadvertency, the work of his original, but depriving perhaps his own of an embellishment which wanted only to be noticed.

If you hear Ballads sung in the streets on the hardships of the Negroes in the islands, they are probably mine. It must be an honour to any man to have given a stroke to that chain, however feeble. I fear however that the attempt will fail. The tidings which have lately reached me from London concerning it, are not the most encouraging. While the matter slept, or was but slightly adverted to, the English only had their share of shame in common with other nations on account of it. But since it has been canvassed and searched to the bottom, since the public attention has been rivetted to the horrible scheme, we can no longer plead either that we did not know it, or did not think of it. Woe be to us if we refuse the poor captives the redress, to which they have so clear a right, and prove ourselves in the sight of God and men, indifferent to all considerations but those of gain.

Adieu,

W. C.

LETTER

To Lady HESKETH,

The Lodge, March 31, 1788.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Mrs. Throckmorton has promised to write to me. I beg that as often as you shall see her, you will give her a smart pinch, and say, "have you written to my Cousin?" I build all my hopes of her performance on this expedient, and for so doing these my Letters, not patent, shall be your sufficient warrant. You are thus to give her the question till she shall answer, Yes. I have written one more Song, and sent it. It is called the Morning Dream, and may be sung to the tune of Tweed-Side, or any other tune that will suit it, for I am not nice on that subject. I would have copied it for you, had I not almost filled my sheet without it, but now, my dear, you must stay till the sweet sirens of London shall bring it to you, or if that happy day should never arrive, I hereby acknowledge myself your debtor to that amount. I shall now probably cease to sing of tortured Negroes, a theme which never pleased me, but which in the hope of doing them some little service, I was not unwilling to handle.

If any thing could have raised Miss More to a higher place in my opinion than she possessed before, it could only be your information that after all, she, and not Mr. Wilberforce, is author of
that

that volume. How comes it to pass, that she, being a woman, writes with a force and energy, and a correctness hitherto arrogated by the men, and not very frequently displayed even by the men themselves! Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER XCIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Weston, May 8, 1788.

Alas! my Library—I must now give it up for a lost thing for ever. The only consolation belonging to the circumstance is, or seems to be, that no such loss did ever befall any other man, or can ever befall me again. As far as books are concerned I am

Totus teres atq rotundus,

and may set fortune at defiance. Those books which had been my Father's, had, most of them, his arms on the inside cover, but the rest no mark, neither his name nor mine. I could mourn for them like Sancho for his Dapple, but it would avail me nothing.

You will oblige me much by sending me Crazy Kate. A gentleman last winter promised me both her, and the Lace-maker, but he went to London, that place in which, as in the grave, "all things are forgotten," and I have never seen either of them.

I begin

I begin to find some prospect of a conclusion, of the Iliad at least, now opening upon me, having reached the eighteenth book. Your Letter found me yesterday in the very fact of dispersing the whole host of Troy, by the voice only of Achilles. There is nothing extravagant in the idea, for you have witnessed a similar effect attending even such a voice as mine, at midnight, from a garret window, on the dogs of a whole parish, whom I have put to flight in a moment.

W. C.

LETTER XCIV.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 12, 1788.

It is probable, my dearest Coz. that I shall not be able to write much, but as much as I can I will. The time between rising and breakfast is all that I can at present find, and this morning I lay longer than usual.

In the stile of the Lady's note to you I can easily perceive a smatch of her character. Neither men nor women write with such neatness of expression, who have not given a good deal of attention to language, and qualified themselves by study. At the same time it gave me much more pleasure to observe, that my Coz. though not standing on the pinnacle of renown quite so elevated,

vated, as that which lifts Mrs. Montagu to the clouds, falls in no degree short of her in this particular ; so that should she make you a member of her academy, she will do it honour. Suspect me not of flattering you, for I abhor the thought ; neither *will* you suspect it. Recollect, that it is an invariable rule with me never to pay compliments to those I love !

Two days, en suite, I have walked to Gayhurst ; a longer journey than I have walked on foot these seventeen years. The first day I went alone, designing merely to make the experiment, and chusing to be at liberty to return at whatsoever point of my pilgrimage I should find myself fatigued. For I was not without suspicion that years, and some other things no less injurious than years, viz. melancholy and distress of mind, might by this time have unfitted me for such achievements. But I found it otherwise. I reached the church, which stands, as you know, in the garden, in fifty-five minutes, and returned in ditto time to Weston. The next day I took the same walk with Mr. Powley, having a desire to shew him the prettiest place in the country. I not only performed these two excursions without injury to my health, but have by means of them gained indisputable proof that my ambulatory faculty is not yet impaired : a discovery which, considering that to my feet alone I am likely, as I have ever been, to be indebted always for my transportation from place to place, I find very delectable.

You will find in the last Gentleman's Magazine, a Sonnet addressed to Henry Cowper, signed T. H. I am the writer of it. No creature knows this but yourself; you will make what use of the intelligence you shall see good.

W. C.

LETTER XCV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

May 24, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

For two excellent Prints I return you my sincere acknowledgments. I cannot say that poor Kate resembles much the original, who was neither so young nor so handsome as the pencil has represented her; but she was a figure well suited to the account given of her in the Task, and has a face exceedingly expressive of despairing melancholy. The Lace-maker is accidentally a good likeness of a young woman, once our neighbour, who was hardly less handsome than the picture twenty years ago; but the loss of one husband, and the acquisition of another, have, since that time, impaired her much; yet she might still be supposed to have sat to the artist.

We dined yesterday with your friend and mine, the most companionable and domestic Mr. C——. The whole kingdom can hardly furnish a spectacle more pleasing to a man who has a
taste

taste for true happiness, than himself, Mrs. C——, and their multitudinous family. Seven long miles are interposed between us, or perhaps I should oftener have an opportunity of declaiming on this subject.

I am now in the nineteenth Book of the Iliad, and on the point of displaying such feats of heroism performed by Achilles, as make all other achievements trivial. I may well exclaim, Oh ! for a Muse of fire ! especially having not only a great host to cope with, but a great river also ; much, however, may be done when Homer leads the way. I should not have chosen to have been the original author of such a business, even though all the Nine had stood at my elbow. Time has wonderful effects. We admire that in an antient, for which we should send a modern bard to Bedlam.

I saw at Mr. C——'s a great curiosity ; an antique bust of Paris in Parian marble. You will conclude that it interested me exceedingly. I pleased myself with supposing that it once stood in Helen's chamber. It was in fact brought from the Levant, and though not well mended, (for it had suffered much by time) is an admirable performance.

W.C.

LIFE OF COWPER.

LETTER XCVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 27, 1788.

The General, in a Letter which came yesterday, sent me inclosed a copy of my Sonnet ; thus introducing it.

“ I send a copy of verses somebody has written in the Gentleman's Magazine for April last. Independent of my partiality towards the subject, I think the lines themselves are good.”

Thus it appears that my poetical adventure has succeeded to my wish ; and I write to him by this post, on purpose to inform him that the somebody in question is myself.

I no longer wonder that Mrs. Montagu stands at the head of all that is called learned, and that every critic veils his bonnet to her superior judgment ; I am now reading, and have reached the middle of her Essay on the Genius of Shakespeare ; a book of which, strange as it may seem, though I must have read it formerly, I had absolutely forgot the existence.

The learning, the good sense, the sound judgment, and the wit displayed in it, fully justify, not only my compliment, but all compliments that either have been already paid to her talents, or shall be paid hereafter. Voltaire, I doubt not, rejoiced that his antagonist wrote in English, and that his countrymen could not possibly

possibly be judges of the dispute. Could they have known how much she was in the right, and by how many thousand miles the Bard of Avon is superior to all their dramatists, the French critic would have lost half his fame among them.

I saw at Mr. C——'s a head of Paris; an antique of Parian marble. His uncle, who left him the estate, brought it, as I understand, from the Levant: you may suppose I viewed it with all the enthusiasm that belongs to a Translator of Homer. It is in reality a great curiosity, and highly valuable.

Our friend Sephus has sent me two Prints; the Lace-maker and Crazy Kate. These also I have contemplated with pleasure; having, as you know, a particular interest in them. The former of them is not more beautiful than a Lace-maker; once our neighbour at Olney; though the artist has assembled as many charms in her countenance as I ever saw in any countenance, one excepted. Kate is both younger and handsomer than the original from which I drew; but she is in a good stile, and as mad as need be.

How does this hot weather suit thee, my dear, in London; as for me, with all my colonades and bowers, I am quite oppressed by it.

W. C.

BETTER.

LIFE OF COWPER.

LETTER XCVII.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 3, 1788.

MY DEAREST COZ.

The excessive heat of these last few days, was indeed oppressive; but excepting the languor that it occasioned both in my mind and body, it was far from being prejudicial to me. It opened ten thousand pores, by which as many mischiefs, the effects of long obstruction, began to breathe themselves forth abundantly. Then came an east wind, baneful to me at all times, but following so closely such a sultry season, uncommonly noxious. To speak in the seaman's phrase, not entirely strange to you, I was *taken all aback*; and the humours which would have escaped, if old Eurys would have given them leave, finding every door shut, have fallen into my eyes. But in a country like this, poor miserable mortals must be content to suffer all that sudden and violent changes can inflict; and if they are quit for about half the plagues that Caliban calls down on Prospero, they may say we are well off, and dance for joy, if the rheumatism or cramp will let them.

Did you ever see an advertisement by one Fowle, a dancing-master of Newport-Pagnel? If not, I will contrive to send it you for your amusement. It is the most extravagantly ludicrous affair of the kind I ever saw. The author of it had the good hap to be
crazed,

crazed, or he had never produced any thing half so clever ; for you will ever observe, that they who are said to have lost their wits, have more than other people. It is, therefore, only a slander with which envy prompts the malignity of persons in their senses to asperse wittier than themselves. But there are countries in the world where the mad have justice done them, where they are revered as the subjects of inspiration, and consulted as oracles. Poor Fowle would have made a figure there.

W. C.

LETTER XCVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Weston, June 8, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your Letter brought me the very first intelligence of the event it mentions. My last Letter from Lady Hesketh gave me reason enough to expect it ; but the certainty of it was unknown to me till I learned it by your information. If gradual decline, the consequence of great age, be a sufficient preparation of the mind to encounter such a loss, our minds were certainly prepared to meet it : yet, to you, I need not say, that no preparation can supersede the feelings of the heart on such occasions. While our friends yet live, inhabitants of the same world with ourselves, they seem still to live to *us* ; we are sure that they sometimes think of us ; and however improbable it may seem, it is never impossible that we may see each other
once

once again. But the grave, like a great gulph, swallows all such expectations ; and in the moment when a beloved friend sinks into it, a thousand tender recollections awaken a regret that will be felt in spite of all reasonings, and let our warnings have been what they may. Thus it is I take my last leave of poor Ashley, whose heart towards me was ever truly parental, and to whose memory I owe a tenderness and respect that will never leave me.

W. C.

LETTER XCIX.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 10, 1788.

MY DEAR COZ.

Your kind Letter of precaution to Mr. Gregson, sent him hither as soon as chapel-service was ended in the evening ; but he found me already apprized of the event that occasioned it, by a line from Sephus, received a few hours before. My dear Uncle's death awakened in me many reflections, which, for a time sunk my spirits. A man like him would have been mourned, had he doubled the age he reached ; at any age his death would have been felt as a loss that no survivor could repair. And though it was not probable that, for my own part, I should ever see him more, yet the consciousness that he still lived, was a comfort to me : let it comfort us now that we have lost him only at a time when nature could afford him to us no longer ; that as his life was blameless, so was his death without anguish ; and that he is gone
to

to heaven. I know not that human life, in its most prosperous state, can present any thing to our wishes half so desirable, as such a close of it.

Not to mingle this subject with others that would ill suit with it, I will add no more at present, than a warm hope that you and your Sister will be able, effectually, to avail yourselves of all the consolatory matter with which it abounds. You gave yourselves, while he lived, to a Father, whose life was doubtless prolonged by your attentions, and whose tenderness of disposition made him always deeply sensible of your kindness in this respect, as well as in many others. His old age was the happiest that I have ever known; and I give you both joy of having had so fair an opportunity, and of having so well used it, to approve yourselves equal to the calls of such a duty in the sight of God and man.

W. C.

LETTER C.

To Lady HESKETH,

The Lodge, June 15, 1788.

Although I know that you must be very much occupied on the present most affecting occasion, yet not hearing from you, I began to be very uneasy on your account, and to fear that your health might have suffered by the fatigue, both of body and spirits that you must have undergone, till a Letter that

reached me yesterday, from the General, set my heart at rest, so, far as that cause of anxiety was in question. He speaks of my Uncle in the tenderest terms; such as shew how truly sensible he was of the amiableness and excellence of his character, and how deeply he regrets his loss. We have indeed lost one, who has not left his like in the present generation of our family, and whose equal, in all respects, no future of it will probably produce. My memory retains so perfect an impression of him, that had I been painter instead of poet, I could from those faithful traces, have perpetuated his face and form with the most minute exactness. And this I the rather wonder at, because some with whom I was equally conversant five and twenty years ago, have almost faded out of all recollection with me; but he made impression not soon to be effaced; and was in figure, in temper, and manner, and in numerous other respects, such as I shall never behold again. I often think what a joyful interview there has been between him and some of his cotemporaries who went before him. The truth of the matter is, my dear, that they are the happy ones, and that we shall never be such ourselves till we have joined the party. Can there be any thing so worthy of our warmest wishes as to enter on an eternal, unchangeable state, in blessed fellowship and communion with those whose society we valued most, and for the best reasons, while they continued with us? A few steps more through a vain foolish world, and this happiness will be yours: but be not hasty, my dear, to accomplish thy journey! For of all that live, thou art one,
whom

whom I can least spare, for thou also art one who shall not leave thy equal behind thee,

W. C.

LETTER CI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, June 23, 1788.

When I tell you that an unanswered Letter troubles my conscience, in some degree like a crime, you will think me endued with a most heroic patience, who have so long submitted to that trouble on account of yours not answered yet. But the truth is, that I have been much engaged. Homer, (you know) affords me constant employment ; besides which I have rather what may be called, considering the privacy in which I have long lived, a numerous correspondence : to one of my friends in particular, a near and much loved relation, I write weekly, and sometimes twice in a week ; nor are these my only excuses ; the sudden changes of the weather have much affected me, and especially with a disorder most unfavourable to letter-writing, an inflammation in my eyes. With all these apologies I approach you once more, not altogether despairing of forgiveness.

It has pleased God to give us rain, without which this part of our country at least must soon have become a desert. The meadows have been parched to a January brown, and we have foddered our cattle for some time as in the winter.—The goodness and power of

R R 2

God

God are never (I believe) so universally acknowledged as at the end of a long drought. Man is naturally a self-sufficient animal; and in all concerns that seem to lie within the sphere of his own ability, thinks little or not at all of the need he always has of protection and furtherance from above : but he is sensible that the clouds will not assemble at his bidding, and that though the clouds assemble, they will not fall in showers, because he commands them. When, therefore, at last, the blessing descends, you shall hear, even in the streets, the most irreligious and thoughtless with one voice exclaim, "Thank God !"—confessing themselves indebted to his favour, and willing, at least so far as words go, to give him the glory. I can hardly doubt therefore, that the earth is sometimes parched, and the crops endangered, in order that the multitude may not want a memento, to whom they owe them, nor absolutely forget the power on which all depend for all things.

Our solitary part of the year is over. Mrs. Unwin's Daughter and Son-in-law have lately spent some time with us; we shall shortly receive from London our old friends the Newtons, (he was once minister of Olney ;) and, when they leave us, we expect, that Lady Hesketh will succeed them, perhaps to spend the summer here, and possibly the winter also. The summer indeed is leaving us at a rapid rate, as do all the seasons, and though I have marked their flight so often, I know not which is the swiftest. Man is never so deluded as when he dreams of his own duration. The answer of the
old

old Patriarch to Pharaoh may be adopted by every man at the close of the longest life. "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage." Whether we look back from fifty, or from twice fifty, the past appears equally a dream; and we can only be said truly to have lived while we have been profitably employed. Alas! then, making the necessary deductions, how short is life! Where men in general to save themselves all the steps they take to no purpose, or to a bad one, what numbers, who are now active, would become sedentary!

Thus I have sermonized through my paper. Living where you live, you can bear with me the better. I always follow the leading of my unconstrained thoughts when I write to a friend, be they grave or otherwise. Homer reminds me of you every day. I am now in the twenty-first Iliad.

Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER CII.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, July 28, 1788.

It is in vain that you tell me you have no talent at description, while in fact you describe better than any body. You have given me a most complete idea of your mansion and its situation; and I doubt not that with your Letter in my hand,
by

by way of map, could I be set down on the spot in a moment, I should find myself qualified to take my walks, and my pastime in whatever quarter of your paradise it should please me the most to visit. We also, as you know, have scenes at Weston worthy of description ; but because you know them well, I will only say ~~that~~ one of them has within these few days been much improved ; I mean the lime walk. By the help of the axe and the wood-bill, which have of late been constantly employed in cutting out all straggling branches that intercepted the arch ; Mr. Throckmorton has now defined it with such exactness, that no cathedral in the world can show one of more magnificence or beauty, I bless myself that I live so near it ; for where it distant several miles, it would be well worth while to visit it, merely as an object of taste ; not to mention the refreshment of such a gloom both to the eyes and spirits. And these are the things which our modern improvers of parks and pleasure grounds have displaced without mercy ; because, forsooth, they are rectilinear. It is a wonder they do not quarrel with the sun-beams for the same reason.

Have you seen the account of five hundred celebrated Authors now living? I am one of them ; but stand charged with the high crime and misdemeanor of totally neglecting method. An accusation which, if the gentleman would take the pains to read me, he would find sufficiently refuted. I am conscious at least myself of having laboured much in the arrangement of my matter,
and

and of having given to the several parts of every book of the Task, as well as to each poem in the first volume, that sort of slight connection which poetry demands ; for in poetry (except professedly of the didactic kind) a logical precision would be stiff, pedantic, and ridiculous. But there is no pleasing some critics ; the comfort is, that I am contented whether they be pleased or not. At the same time, to my honour be it spoken, the chronicler of us five hundred prodigies bestows on me, for ought I know, more commendations than on any other of my confraternity. May he live to write the histories of as many thousand Poets, and find me the very best among them ! Amen !

I join with you, my dearest Coz. in wishing that I owned the fee simple of all the beautiful scenes around you ; but such emoluments were never designed for Poets. Am I not happier than ever Poet was, in having thee for my Cousin ; and in the expectation of thy arrival here, whenever Strawberry Hill shall lose thee ?

Ever thine,

W. C.



LETTER CIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, August 9, 1788.

The Newtons are still here, and continue with us I believe until the 15th of the month. Here is also
my

my friend Mr. Rose, a valuable young man, who, attracted by the effluvia of my genius, found me out in my retirement last January twelve-month. I have not permitted him to be idle, but have made him transcribe for me the twelfth book of the Iliad. He brings me the compliments of several of the Literati, with whom he is acquainted in town; and tells me, that from Dr. Maclean, whom he saw lately, he learns that my Book is in the hands of sixty different persons at the Hague, who are all enchanted with it; not forgetting the said Dr. Maclean himself, who tells him that he reads it every day, and is always the better for it. Oh rare we!

I have been employed this morning in composing a Latin motto for the King's clock. The embellishments of which are by Mr. Bacon. That gentleman breakfasted with us on Wednesday, having come thirty-seven miles out of his way on purpose to see your Cousin. At his request I have done it, and have made two; he will chuse that which liketh him best. Mr. Bacon is a most excellent man, and a most agreeable companion: I would that he lived not so remote, or that he had more opportunity of travelling.

There is not, so far as I know, a syllable of the rhyming correspondence between me and my poor Brother left, save and except the six lines of it quoted in yours. I *had* the whole of it, but it perished in the wreck of a thousand other things when I left the Temple.

Breakfast calls. Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER CIV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, August 18, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I left you with a sensible regret, alleviated only by the consideration, that I shall see you again in October. I was under some concern also, lest, not being able to give you any certain directions myself, nor knowing where you might find a guide, you should wander and fatigue yourself, good walker as you are, before you could reach Northampton. Perhaps you heard me whistle just after our separation ; it was to call back Beau, who was running after you with all speed to intreat you to return with me. For my part, I took my own time to return, and did not reach home till after one ; and then so weary that I was glad of my great chair ; to the comforts of which I added a crust, and a glass of rum and water, not without great occasion. Such a foot-traveller am I.

I am writing on Monday, but whether I shall finish my Letter this morning depends on Mrs. Unwin's coming sooner or later down to breakfast. Something tells me that you set off to-day for Birmingham ; and though it be a sort of Iricism to say here, I beseech you take care of yourself, for the day threatens great heat, I cannot help it ; the weather may be cold enough at the time when that good advice shall reach you, but be it hot or be it cold, to a

man who travels as you travel, take care of yourself, can never be an unreasonable caution. I am sometimes distressed on this account, for though you are young, and well made for such exploits, those very circumstances are more likely than any thing to betray you into danger.

Consule quid valeant plantæ, quid ferre recusent.

The Newtons left us on Friday. We frequently talked about you after your departure, and every thing that was spoken was to your advantage. I know they will be glad to see you in London, and perhaps when your summer and autumn rambles are over, you will afford them that pleasure. The Throckmortons are equally well disposed to you; and them also I recommend to you as a valuable connection; the rather, because you can only cultivate it at Weston.

I have not been idle since you went, having not only laboured as usual at the Iliad, but composed a *spick and span* new piece, called, "The Dog and the Water-lilly;" which you shall see when we meet again. I believe I related to you the incident which is the subject of it. I have also read most of Lavater's Aphorisms; they appear to me some of them wise, many of them whimsical, a few of them false, and not a few of them extravagant. Nil illi medium—If he finds in a man the feature or quality that he approves, he Deifies him; if the contrary, he is a Devil. His verdict is in neither case, I suppose, a just one.

LETTER.

LETTER CV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, Sept. 11, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Since your departure I have twice visited the Oak, and with an intention to push my inquiries a mile beyond it, where it seems I should have found another Oak, much larger and much more respectable than the former; but once I was hindered by the rain, and once by the sultriness of the day. This latter Oak has been known by the name of Judith many ages; and is said to have been an Oak at the time of the Conquest. If I have not an opportunity to reach it before your arrival here, we will attempt that exploit together; and even if I should have been able to visit it ere you come, I shall yet be glad to do so; for the pleasure of extraordinary sights, like all other pleasures, is doubled by the participation of a friend.

You wish for a copy of my little Dog's eulogium, which I will therefore transcribe; but by so doing, I shall leave myself but scanty room for prose.

I shall be sorry if our neighbours at the Hall should have left it, when we have the pleasure of seeing you. I want you to see them soon again, that a little *consuetudo* may wear off restraint; and you may be able to improve the advantage you have already gain-

Sd
ed

ed in that quarter. I pitied you for the fears which deprived you of your Uncle's company, and the more having suffered so much by those fears myself. Fight against that vicious fear, for such it is, as strenuously as you can. It is the worst enemy that can attack a man destined to the Forum—it ruined me. To associate as much as possible with the most respectable company, for good sense and good breeding, is, I believe, the only, at least I am sure its the best remedy. The society of men of pleasure will not cure it, but rather leaves us more exposed to its influence in company of better persons.

Now for the Dog and the Water-lilly.*

W. C.

1.

ON A SPANIEL, CALLED BEAU,

KILLING A YOUNG BIRD.

*A Spaniel, Beau, that fares like you,
Well-fed, and at his ease,
Should wiser be, than to pursue
Each trifle that he sees.*

But

• NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

As the Poem inserted in this Letter has been printed repeatedly, I here introduce in its stead two sprightly little Poems, on the same favorite Spaniel, written indeed at a later period, but hitherto, I believe, unpublished.

*But you have kill'd a tiny bird,
Which flew not till to-day,
Against my orders, whom you heard
Forbidding you the prey.*

*Nor did you kill, that you might eat,
And ease a doggish pain,
For him, though chas'd with furious heat,
You left, where he was slain.*

*Nor was he of the thievish sort,
Or one, whom blood allures,
But innocent was all his sport,
Whom you have torn for yours.*

*My Dog ! what remedy remains,
Since teach you all I can,
I see you, after all my pains,
So much resemble Man ?*

2.

BEAU'S REPLY.

*Sir ! when I flew to seize the Bird,
In spite of your command,
A louder voice than yours I heard,
And harder to withstand :*

You

*You cried—"Forbear!"—but in my breast
 A mightier cried—"Proceed!"
 'Twas Nature, Sir, whose strong behest
 Impell'd me to the deed.*

*Yet much as Nature I respect,
 I ventur'd once to break
 (As you perhaps may recollect)
 Her precept, for your sake :*

*And when your Linnet, on a day,
 Passing his prison-door,
 Had flutter'd all his strength away,
 And panting press'd the floor.*

*Well knowing him a sacred thing,
 Not destin'd to my tooth,
 I only kiss'd his ruffled wing,
 And lick'd his feathers smooth.*

*Let my obedience then excuse
 My disobedience now!
 Nor some reproof yourself refuse
 From your aggriev'd Bow-wow!*

*If killing Birds be such a crime,
 (Which I can hardly see)
 What think you, Sir, of killing Time
 With verse address'd to me?*

LETTER

LETTER CVI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, Sept. 25, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

*Say what is the thing by my Riddle design'd
Which you carried to London, and yet left behind.*

I expect your answer, and without a fee.—The half hour next before breakfast I devote to you; the moment Mrs. Unwin arrives in the study, be what I have written much or little, I shall make my bow, and take leave. If you live to be a Judge, as if I augur right you will, I shall expect to hear of a walking circuit.

I was shocked at what you tell me of—superior talents, it seems, give no security for propriety of conduct; on the contrary, having a natural tendency to nourish pride, they often betray the possessor into such mistakes, as men more moderately gifted never commit. Ability, therefore, is not wisdom; and an ounce of grace is a better guard against gross absurdity, than the brightest talents in the world.

I rejoice that you are prepared for transcript work; here will be plenty for you. The day on which you shall receive this, I beg you will remember to drink one glass at least to the success of the Iliad, which I finished the day before yesterday, and yesterday

day began the Odyssey. It will be some time before I shall perceive myself travelling in another road ; the objects around me are at present so much the same ; Olympus and a council of Gods meet me at my first entrance. To tell you the truth, I am weary of Heroes and Deities, and, with reverence be it spoken, shall be glad for variety's sake, to exchange their company for that of a Cyclops.

Weston has not been without its tragedies since you left us ; Mrs. Throckmorton's piping Bullfinch has been eaten by a Rat, and the villain left nothing but poor Bully's beak behind him. It will be a wonder if this event does not at some convenient time employ my versifying passion. Did ever fair lady, from the Lesbia of Catullus, to the present day, lose her bird, and find no Poet to commemorate the loss ?

W. C.

LETTER CVII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, Nov. 30, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your Letter, accompanying the books, with which you have favoured me, and for which I return you a thousand thanks, did not arrive till yesterday. I shall have great pleasure in taking now and then a peep at my old friend Vincent Bourne, the neatest of all men in his versification, though when I
was

was under his ushership, at Westminster, the most slovenly in his person. He was so inattentive to his boys, and so indifferent whether they brought him good or bad exercises, or none at all, that he seemed determined, as he was the best, so to be the last Latin Poet of the Westminster line; a plot which I believe he executed very successfully, for I have not heard of any who has at all deserved to be compared with him.

We had hardly any rain or snow since you left us; the roads are accordingly as dry as in the middle of summer, and the opportunity of walking much more favourable. We have no season, in my mind, so pleasant as such a winter; and I account it particularly fortunate, that such it proves, my Cousin being with us. She is in good health, and cheerful, so are we all; and this I say, knowing you will be glad to hear it, for you have seen the time when this could not be said of all your friends at Weston. We shall rejoice to see you here at Christmas; but I recollect when I hinted such an excursion by word of mouth, you gave me no great encouragement to expect you. Minds alter, and yours may be of the number of those that do so; and if it should, you will be entirely welcome to us all. Were there no other reason for your coming than merely the pleasure it will afford to us, that reason alone would be sufficient; but after so many toils, and with so many more in prospect, it seems essential to your well-being that you should allow yourself a respite, which perhaps you can take as comfortably, I am sure as quietly, here as any where.

The ladies beg to be remembered to you with all possible esteem and regard; they are just come down to breakfast, and being at this moment extremely talkative, oblige me to put an end to my Letter.

Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER CVIII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

The Lodge, Jan. 19 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have taken since you went away many of the walks which we have taken together, and none of them I believe without thoughts of you. I have, though not a good memory in general, yet a good local memory; and can recollect by the help of a tree, or a stile, what you said on that particular spot. For this reason I purpose when the summer is come, to walk with a book in my pocket; what I read at my fire-side I forget, but what I read under a hedge, or at the side of a pond, that pond and that hedge will always bring to my remembrance: and this is a sort of *Memoria technica*, which I would recommend to you, if I did not know that you have no occasion for it.

I am reading Sir John Hawkins, and still hold the same opinion of his book as when you were here. There are in it undoubtedly some awkwardnesses of phrase, and, which is worse, here and there some unequivocal indications of a vanity not easily pardonable.

able in a man of his years ; but on the whole I find it amusing, and to me at least, to whom every thing that has passed in the literary world within these five and twenty years is new, sufficiently replete with information. Mr. Throckmorton told me about three days since, that it was lately recommended to him by a sensible man, as a book that would give him great insight into the history of modern literature, and modern men of letters ; a commendation which I really think it merits. Fifty years hence, perhaps, the world will feel itself obliged to him.

W. C.

LETTER CIX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

The Lodge, Jan. 24, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

We have heard from my Cousin in Norfolk-street, she reached home safely, and in good time. An observation suggests itself which, though I have but little time for observation making, I must allow myself time to mention. Accidents, as we call them, generally occur when there seems least reason to expect them ; if a friend of ours travels far in different roads, and at an unfavourable season, we are reasonably alarmed for the safety of one in whom we take so much interest ; yet how seldom do we hear a tragical account of such a journey ! It is on the contrary, at home, in our yard or garden, perhaps in our parlour,

T T 2

that

that disaster finds us ; in any place, in short, where we seem perfectly out of the reach of danger. The lesson inculcated by such a procedure on the part of Providence towards us, seems to be that of perpetual dependence.

Having preached this sermon, I must hasten to a close ; you know that I am not idle, nor can I afford to be so ; I would gladly spend more time with you, but by some means or other this day has hitherto proved a day of hindrance and confusion,

W. C.

LETTER CX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

The Lodge, May 20, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

Finding myself between Twelve and One, at the end of the Seventeenth Book of the Odyssey, I give the interval between the present moment and the time of walking, to you. If I write Letters before I sit down to Homer, I feel my spirits too flat for Poetry, and too flat for Letter-writing if I address myself to Homer first ; but the last I chuse as the least evil, because my friends will pardon my dullness, but the public will not.

I had been some days uneasy on your account when yours arrived. We should have rejoiced to have seen you, would your engagements have permitted : but in the autumn I hope, if not before

fore, we shall have the pleasure to receive you: At what time we may expect Lady Hesketh at present I know not ; but imagine that at any time after the month of June you will be sure to find her with us, which I mention, knowing that to meet you will add a relish to all the pleasures she can find at Weston.

When I wrote those Lines on the Queen's visit, I thought I had performed well ; but it belongs to me, as I have told you before, to dislike whatever I write when it has been written a month. The performance was, therefore, sinking in my esteem, when your approbation of it arriving in good time, buoyed it up again. It will now keep possession of the place it holds in my good opinion, because it has been favoured with yours ; and a copy will certainly be at your service whenever you chuse to have one.

Nothing is more certain than that when I wrote the line,

God made the country, and man made the town,

I had not the least recollection of that very similar one, which you quote from Hawkins Brown. It convinces me that critics (and none more than Warton, in his Notes on Milton's minor Poems) have often charged authors with borrowing what they drew from their own fund. Brown was an entertaining companion when he had drank his bottle, but not before, this proved a snare to him, and he would sometimes drink too much ; but I know not that he was chargeable with any other irregularities. He had those among
his

his intimates, who would not have been such, had he been otherwise viciously inclined ; the Duncombs, in particular, father and son, who were of unblemished morals.

W. C.

ON THE QUEEN'S VISIT TO LONDON,

The Night of the 17th March, 1789.

*When long sequester'd from his throne
George took his seat again,
By right of worth, not blood alone,
Entitled here to reign !*

*Then Loyalty, with all her lamps
New trimm'd, a gallant show !
Chasing the darkness, and the damps,
Set London in a glow.*

*'Twas hard to tell, of streets, of squares,
Which form'd the chief display,
These most resembling cluster'd stars,
Those the long milky way.*

*Bright shone the roofs, the domes, the spires,
And rockets flew, self-driven,
To hang their momentary fires
Amid the vault of Heaven.*

So,

*So, fire with water to compare,
The ocean serves on high,
Up-spouted by a Whale in air,
To express unweary joy.*

*Had all the pageants of the world
In one procession join'd,
And all the banners been unfurl'd
That heralds e'er design'd.*

*For no such sight had England's Queen
Forsaken her retreat,
Where George recover'd made a scene
Sweet always, doubly sweet.*

*Yet glad she came that night to prove,
A witness undescried,
How much the object of her love
Was lov'd by all beside.*

*Darkness the skies had mantled o'er
In aid of her design—
Darkness O! Queen! ne'er call'd before
To veil a deed of thine!*

*On borrow'd wheels away she flies,
Resolv'd to be unknown,
And gratify no curious eyes
That night, except her own.*

Arriv'd,

*Arriv'd, a night like noon she sees,
And hears the millions hum;
As all by instinct, like the bees,
Had known their Sov'reign come.*

*Pleas'd she beheld aloft pourtray'd
On many a splendid wall,
Emblems of health, and heav'nly aid,
And George the theme of all.*

*Unlike the ænigmatic line,
So difficult to spell!
Which shook Belshazzar, at his wine,
The night his city fell.*

*Soon, watery grew her eyes, and dim,
But with a joyful tear!
None else, except in pray'r for him,
George ever drew from her.*

*It was a scene in every part
Like that in fable feign'd,
And seem'd by some magician's art
Created, and sustain'd.*

*But other magic there she knew,
Had been exerted, none,
To raise such wonders in her view,
Save love of George alone!*

That

*That cordial thought her spirits cheer'd,
And through the cumb'rous throng,
Not else unworthy to be fear'd,
Convey'd her calm along.*

*So, ancient Poets say, serene
The Sea-maid rides the waves,
And fearless of the billowy scene,
Her peaceful bosom laves.*

*With more than astronomic eyes
She view'd the sparkling show ;
One Georgian Star adorns the skies,
She myriads found below.*

*Yet let the glories of a night
Like that, once seen, suffice !
Heav'n grant us no such future sight,
Such previous woe the price !*

LETTER CXI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

The Lodge, June 5, 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am going to give you a deal of trouble, but London folks must be content to be troubled by country folks ; for in London only, can our strange necessities be supplied.

VOL. I.

U U

You

You must buy for me, if you please, a Cuckow Clock ; and now I will tell you where they are sold, which, Londoner as you are, it is possible you may not know. They are sold, I am informed, at more houses than one, in that narrow part of Holborn which leads into Broad St. Giles'. It seems they are well-going clocks and cheap, which are the two best recommendations of any clock. They are made in Germany, and such numbers of them are annually imported, that they are become even a considerable article of commerce.

I return you many thanks for Boswell's Tour. I read it to Mrs. Unwin after supper, and we find it amusing. There is much trash in it, as there must always be in every narrative that relates indiscriminately all that passed. But now and then the Doctor speaks like an oracle, and that makes amends for all. Sir John was a coxcomb, and Boswell is not less a coxcomb, though of another kind. I fancy Johnson made coxcombs of all his friends, and they in return made him a coxcomb ; for, with reverence be it spoken, such he certainly was, and flattered as he was, he was sure to be so.

Thanks for your invitation to London, but unless London can come to me, I fear we shall never meet. I was sure that you would love my friend, when you should once be well acquainted with him ; and equally sure that he would take kindly to you.

Now for Homer.

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER CXII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

The Lodge, June 20, 1789.

AMICO MIO,

I am truly sorry that it must be so long before we can have an opportunity to meet. My Cousin in her last Letter but one, inspired me with other expectations, expressing a purpose, if the matter could be so contrived, of bringing you with her; I was willing to believe that you had consulted together on the subject, and found it feasible. A month was formerly a trifle in my account, but at my present age I give it all its importance, and grudge, that so many months should yet pass in which I have not even a glimpse of those I love; and of whom, the course of nature considered, I must ere long, take leave for ever—But I shall live till August.

Many thanks for the Cuckow, which arrived perfectly safe and goes well, to the amusement and amazement of all who hear it. Hannah lies awake to hear it; and I am not sure that we have not others in the house that admire his music as much as she.

Having read both Hawkins and Boswell, I now think myself almost as much a master of Johnson's character as if I had known him personally; and cannot but regret, that our *Bards of other*

times found no such Biographers as these. They have both been ridiculed, and the Wits have had their laugh; but such an history of Milton or Shakespeare, as they have given of Johnson—Oh, how desirable!

W. C.

LETTER CXIII.

To Mrs. THROCKMORTON.

July 18, 1789.

Many thanks, my dear Madam, for your extract from George's Letter! I retain but little Italian; yet that little was so forcibly mustered by the consciousness that I was myself the subject, that I presently became master of it. I have always said that George is a Poet, and I am never in his company but I discover proofs of it; and the delicate address, by which he has managed his complimentary mention of me, convinces me of it still more than ever. Here are a thousand Poets of us who have impudence enough to write for the public; but amongst the modest men, who are by diffidence restrained from such an enterprise, are those who would eclipse us all. I wish that George would make the experiment: I would bind on his laurels with my own hand.

Your Gardener has gone after his wife; but having neglected

to

to take his lyre, *alias* fiddle, with him, has not yet brought home his Eurydice. Your clock in the hall has stopped ; and (strange to tell !) it stopped at sight of the Watch-maker. For he only looked at it, and it has been motionless ever since. Mr. Gregson is gone, and the Hall is a desolation. Pray don't think any place pleasant, that you may find in your rambles, that we may see you the sooner. Your aviary is all in good health. I pass it every day, and often inquire at the lattice : the inhabitants of it send their duty, and wish for your return. I took notice of the inscription on your seal, and had we an artist here capable of furnishing me with another, you should read on mine " *Encore une lettre.*"

Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER CXIV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

The Lodge, July 23, 1789.

You do well, my dear Sir, to improve your opportunity ; to speak in the rural phrase, this is your sowing time, and the sheaves you look for can never be yours unless you make that use of it. The colour of our whole life is generally such as the three or four first years, in which we are our own masters, make it. Then it is that we may be said to shape our own destiny, and to treasure up for ourselves a series of future successes or disappointments. Had I employed my time as wisely as you, in a situation.

tion very similar to yours, I had never been a Poet perhaps, but I might by this time have acquired a character of more importance in society ; and a situation in which my friends would have been better pleased to see me. But three years mis-spent in an Attorney's office, were almost of course followed by several more equally mis-spent in the Temple ; and the consequence has been, as the Italian Epitaph says, "*Sto qui.*"—The only use I can make of myself now, at least the best, is to serve *in terrorem* to others, when occasion may happen to offer, that they may escape (so far as my admonitions can have any weight with them) my folly and my fate. When you feel yourself tempted to relax a little of the strictness of your present discipline, and to indulge in amusement incompatible with your future interests, think on your friend at Weston.

Having said this, I shall next, with my whole heart, invite you hither, and assure you that I look forward to approaching August with great pleasure ; because it promises me your company. After a little time (which we shall wish longer) spent with us, you will return invigorated to your studies, and pursue them with the more advantage. In the mean time you have lost little, in point of season, by being confined to London. Incessant rains, and meadows under water, have given to the summer the air of winter, and the country has been deprived of half its beauties.

It is time to tell you that we are all well, and often make you
our

our subject. This is the third meeting that my Cousin and we have had in this country ; and a great instance of good fortune I account it in such a world as this, to have expected such a pleasure thrice without being once disappointed. Add to this wonder as soon as you can by making yourself of the party.

W. C.

LETTER CXV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, August 8, 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Come when you will, or when you can, you cannot come at a wrong time, but we shall expect you on the day mentioned.

If you have any book that you think will make pleasant evening reading, bring it with you. I now read Mrs. Piozzi's Travels to the ladies after supper, and shall probably have finished them before we shall have the pleasure of seeing you. It is the fashion, I understand, to condemn them. But we, who make books ourselves, are more merciful to book-makers. I would that every fastidious judge of authors, were, himself, obliged to write ; there goes more to the composition of a volume than many critics imagine.

gine. I have often wondered that the same Poet who wrote the Dunciad, should have written these lines,

*The mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me.*

Alas ! for Pope, if the mercy he showed to others, was the measure of the mercy he received ! he was the less pardonable too, because experienced in all the difficulties of composition.

I scratch this between dinner and tea ; a time when I cannot write much without disordering my noddle, and bringing a flush into my face. You will excuse me, therefore, if through respect for the two important considerations of health and beauty, I conclude myself,

Ever yours,

W. C.

LETTER CXVI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, Sept. 24, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You left us exactly at the wrong time. Had you stayed till now, you would have had the pleasure of hearing even my Cousin say—"I am cold"—And the still greater pleasure
of

of being warm yourself ; for I have had a fire in the study ever since you went. It is the fault of our summers that they are hardly ever warm or cold enough. Where they warmer we should not want a fire, and were they colder we should have one,

I have twice seen and conversed with Mr. J——. He is witty, intelligent, and agreeable beyond the common measure of men who are so. But it is the constant effect of a spirit of party to make those hateful to each other, who are truly amiable in themselves.

Beau sends his love ; he was melancholy the whole day after your departure.

W. C.

LETTER CXVII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, Sept. 11, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The hamper is come, and come safe ; and the contents I can affirm on my own knowledge, are excellent. It chanced that another hamper and a box came by the same conveyance, all which I unpacked and expounded in the hall ; my Cousin sitting mean time on the stairs, spectatress of the business. We

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diverted

diverted ourselves with imagining the manner in which Homer would have described the scene. Detailed in his circumstantial way, it would have furnished materials for a paragraph of considerable length in an Odyssey.

*The straw-stuff'd hamper with his ruthless steel
He open'd, cutting sheer th' inserted cords
Which bound the lid and lip secure. Forth came
The rustling package first, bright straw of wheat,
Or oats, or barley ; next a bottle green
Throat-full, clear spirits the contents, distill'd
Drop after drop odorous, by the art
Of the fair mother of his friend—the Rose.*

And so on.

I should rejoice to be the hero of such a tale in the hands of Homer.

You will remember, I trust, that when the state of your health or spirits calls for rural walks and fresh air, you have always a retreat at Weston.

We are all well, all love you, down to the very dog ; and shall be glad to hear that you have exchanged languor for alacrity, and the debility that you mention, for indefatigable vigour.

Mr. Throckmorton has made me a handsome present ; Vil-
loisson's

loisson's edition of the Iliad, elegantly bound by Edwards. If I live long enough, by the contributions of my friends, I shall once more be possessed of a library.

W. C.

LETTER CXVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Dec. 18, 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The present appears to me a wonderful period in the history of mankind. That nations so long contentedly slaves should on a sudden become enamoured of liberty, and undersand, as suddenly, their own natural right to it, feeling themselves at the same time inspired with resolution to assert it, seems difficult to account for from natural causes. With respect to the final issue of all this, I can only say, that if, having discovered the value of liberty, they should next discover the value of peace, and lastly, the value of the word of God, they will be happier than they ever were since the rebellion of the first pair, and as happy as it is possible they should be in the present life.

Most sincerely yours,

W. C.

LETTER CXIX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

The Lodge, Jan. 3, 1790.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have been long silent, but you have had the charity I hope, and believe, not to ascribe my silence to a wrong cause. The truth is, I have been too busy to write to any body, having been obliged to give my early mornings to the revision and correction of a little volume of Hymns for Children, written by I know not whom. This task I finished but yesterday, and while it was in hand, wrote only to my Cousin, and to her rarely. From her, however, I knew that you would hear of my well being, which made me less anxious about my debts to you than I could have been otherwise.

I am almost the only person at Weston, known to you, who have enjoyed tolerable health this winter. In your next Letter give us some account of your own state of health, for I have had my anxieties about you. The winter has been mild; but our winters are in general such, that when a friend leaves us in the beginning of that season, I always feel in my heart a *perhaps*, importing that we have possibly met for the last time, and that the Robins may whistle on the grave of one of us before the return of summer.

I am still thrumming Homer's lyre; that is to say, I am still employed in my last revision; and to give you some idea of the intenseness

tenseness of my toils, I will inform you that it cost me all the morning yesterday, and all the evening, to translate a single simile to my mind. The transitions from one member of the subject to another, though easy and natural in the Greek, turn out often so intolerably awkward in an English version, that almost endless labour, and no little address are requisite to give them grace and elegance. I forget if I told you that your German Clavis has been of considerable use to me. I am indebted to it for a right understanding of the manner in which Achilles prepared pork, mutton, and goat's flesh for the entertainment of his friends, in the night when they came deputed by Agamemnon to negotiate a reconciliation. A passage of which nobody in the world is perfectly master, myself only, and Schaufelbergerus excepted, nor ever was, except when Greek was a *live* language.

I do not know whether my Cousin has told you or not, how I brag in my Letters to her concerning my Translation; perhaps her modesty feels more for me than mine for myself, and she would blush to let even you know the degree of my self-conceit on that subject. I will tell you, however, expressing myself as decently as vanity will permit, that it has undergone such a change for the better in this last revisal, that I have much warmer hopes of success than formerly.

W. C.

LETTER

To Lady HESKETH,

The Lodge, Jan. 23, 1790.

MY DEAR COZ.

I had a Letter yesterday from the wild boy Johnson, for whom I have conceived a great affection. It was just such a Letter as I like, of the true helter-skelter kind; and though he writes a remarkably good hand, scribbled with such rapidity that it was barely legible. He gave me a droll account of the adventures of Lord Howard's Note, and of his own in pursuit of it. The Poem he brought me came as from Lord Howard, with his Lordship's request that I would revise it. It is in the form of a Pastoral, and is entituled "*The Tale of the Lute, or, the Beauties of Audley End.*" I read it attentively; was much pleased with part of it, and part of it I equally disliked. I told him so, and in such terms as one naturally uses when there seems to be no occasion to qualify, or to alleviate censure. I observed him afterwards somewhat more thoughtful and silent, but occasionally as pleasant as usual; and in Kilwick-wood; where we walked the next day, the truth came out; that he was himself the author, and that Lord Howard not approving it altogether, and several friends of his own age, to whom he had shewn it, differing from his Lordship in opinion, and being highly pleased with it, he had come at last to a resolution to abide by my judgment; a measure to which Lord
Howard

Howard by all means advised him. He accordingly brought it, and will bring it again in the summer, when we shall lay our heads together and try to mend it.

I have lately had a Letter also from Mrs. King, to whom indeed I had written to inquire whether she were living or dead, she tells me the critics expect from my Homer every thing in some parts, and that in others I shall fall short. These are the Cambridge critics; and she has her intelligence from the Botanical Professor, Martyn. That gentleman in reply, answers them, that I shall fall short in nothing, but shall disappoint them all. It shall be my endeavour to do so, and I am not without hope of succeeding.

W. C.

LETTER CXXI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

The Lodge, Feb. 2, 1790.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Should Heyne's Homer appear before mine, which I hope is not probable, and should he adopt in it the opinion of Bentley, that the whole last Odyssey is spurious, I will dare to contradict both him and the Doctor. I am only in part of Bentley's mind (if indeed his mind were such) in this matter, and giant as he was in learning, and eagle-eyed in criticism, am persuaded, convinced, and sure (can I be more positive?) that except

cept from the moment when the Ithacans begin to mediate an attack on the cottage of Laertes, and thence to the end, that book is the work of Homer. From the moment aforesaid, I yield the point, or rather have never, since I had any skill in Homer, felt myself at all inclined to dispute it. But I believe perfectly, at the same time, that, Homer himself alone excepted, the Greek Poet never existed who could have written the speeches made by the shade of Agamemnon; in which there is more insight into the human heart discovered, than I ever saw in any other work, unless in Shakespeare's. I am equally disposed to fight for the whole passage that describes Laertes, and the interview between him and Ulysses. Let Bentley grant these to Homer, and I will shake hands with him as to all the rest. The battle with which the book concludes is, I think, a paltry battle, and there is a huddle in the management of it altogether unworthy of my favourite, and the favourite of all ages.

If you should happen to fall into company with Dr. Warton again, you will not, I dare say, forget to make him my respectful compliments, and to assure him that I felt myself not a little flattered by the favourable mention he was pleased to make of me, and my labours. The Poet who pleases a man like him, has nothing left to wish for. I am glad that you were pleased with my young Cousin Johnson; he is a boy, and bashful, but has great merit in respect both of character and intellect. So far at least as in a week's knowledge

ledge

ledge of him I could possibly learn, he is very amiable and very sensible, and inspired me with a warm wish to know him better.

W. C.

LETTER CXXII.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 9, 1790.

I have sent you lately scraps instead of Letters, having had occasion to answer immediately on the receipt, which always happens while I am *deep in Homer*.

I knew when I recommended Johnson to you, that you would find some way to serve him, and so it has happened, for notwithstanding your own apprehensions to the contrary, you have already procured him a chaplainship. This is pretty well, considering that it is an early day, and that you have but just begun to know that there is such a man under heaven. I had rather myself be patronized by a person of small interest, with a heart like yours, than by the Chancellor himself, if he did not care a farthing for me.

If I did not desire you to make my acknowledgments to Anonymous, as I believe I did not, it was because I am not aware that I am warranted to do so. But the omission is of less consequence, because whoever he is, though he has no objection to doing the kindest things, he seems to have an aversion to the thanks they merit.

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You

You must know that two Odes composed by Horace, have lately been discovered at Rome ; I wanted them transcribed into the blank leaves of a little Horace of mine, and Mrs. Throckmorton performed that service for me ; in a blank leaf, therefore, of the same book, I wrote the following.

W. C.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON,

On her beautiful Transcript of Horace's Ode, *Ad librum suum.*

*Maria, could Horace have guess'd
 What honours awaited his Ode,
 To his own little volume address'd,
 The honour which you have bestow'd ;
 Who have traced it in characters here,
 So elegant, even, and neat ;
 He had laugh'd at the critical sneer,
 Which he seems to have trembled to meet.*

*And sneer, if you please, he had said,
 Hereafter a Nymph shall arise,
 Who shall give me, when you are all dead,
 The glory your malice denies ;
 Shall dignity give to my lay,
 Although but a mere bagatelle ;
 And even a Poet shall say,
 Nothing ever was written so well.*

LETTER

LETTER CXXIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Feb. 26, 1790.

You have set my heart at ease, my Cousin, so far as you were yourself the object of its anxieties. What other troubles it feels can be cured by God alone. But you are never silent a week longer than usual, without giving an opportunity to my imagination (ever fruitful in flowers of a sable hue) to tease me with them day and night. London is indeed a pestilent place, as you call it, and I would, with all my heart, that thou hadst less to do with it: were you under the same roof with me, I should know you to be safe, and should never distress you with melancholy Letters.

I feel myself well enough inclined to the measure you propose, and will shew to your new acquaintance, with all my heart, a sample of my Translation. But it shall not be if you please, taken from the Odyssey. It is a poem of a gentler character than the Iliad, and as I propose to carry her by a *coup de main*, I shall employ Achilles, Agamemnon, and the two armies of Greece and Troy, in my service. I will, accordingly, send you in the box that I received from you last night, the two first books of the Iliad, for that lady's perusal; to those I have given a third revisal; for them, there-

Y Y 2

fore,

fore, I will be answerable, and am not afraid to stake the credit of my work upon *them* with her, or with any living wight, especially one who understands the original. I do not mean that even they are finished ; for I shall examine and cross-examine them yet again, and so you may tell her ; but I know that they will not disgrace me ; whereas it is so long since I have looked at the *Odyssey*, that I know nothing at all about it. They shall set sail from Olney on Monday morning in the *Diligence*, and will reach you, I hope, in the evening. As soon as she has done with them I shall be glad to have them again ; for the time draws near when I shall want to give them the last touch.

I am delighted with Mrs. Bodham's kindness in giving me the only picture of my own Mother, that is to be found I suppose in all the world. I had rather possess it than the richest jewel in the British crown, for I loved her with an affection, that her death, fifty-two years since, has not in the least abated. I remember her too, young as I was, when she died, well enough to know, that it is a very exact resemblance of her, and as such it is to me invaluable. Every body loved her, and with an amiable character so impressed on all her features, every body was sure to do so.

I have a very affectionate, and a very clever Letter from Johnson, who promises me the transcript of the books entrusted to him in a few days. I have a great love for that young man, he has
some

some drops of the same stream in his veins that once animated the original of that dear picture.

W. C.

LETTER CXXIV.

To Mrs. BODHAM.

Weston, Feb. 27, 1790.

MY DEAREST ROSE,

Whom I thought withered, and fallen from the stalk, but whom I find still alive: nothing could give me greater pleasure than to know it, and to learn it from yourself. I loved you dearly when you were a child, and love you not a jot the less for having ceased to be so. Every creature that bears any affinity to my own Mother is dear to me, and you, the Daughter of her Brother, are but one remove distant from her: I love you, therefore, and love you much, both for her sake, and for your own. The world could not have furnished you with a present so acceptable to me, as the picture which you have so kindly sent me. I received it the night before last, and viewed it with a trepidation of nerves and spirits somewhat akin to what I should have felt, had the dear original presented herself to my embraces. I kissed it, and hung it where it is the last object that I see at night, and of course, the first on which I open my eyes in the morning. She died when I had completed my sixth year, yet I remember
her

her well, and am an ocular witness of the great fidelity of the copy. I remember too a multitude of the maternal tendernesses which I received from her, and which have endeared her memory to me beyond expression. There is in me, I believe, more of the Donne than of the Cowper, and though I love all of both names, and have a thousand reasons to love those of my own name, yet I feel the bond of nature draw me vehemently to your side. I was thought in the days of my childhood much to resemble my Mother, and in my natural temper, of which, at the age of fifty-eight, I must be supposed a competent judge, can trace both her, and my late Uncle, your Father. Somewhat of his irritability, and a little, I would hope, both of his, and of her ———, I know not what to call it, without seeming to praise myself, which is not my intention, but speaking to *you*, I will even speak out, and say *good-nature*. Add to all this, I deal much in Poetry, as did our venerable ancestor, the Dean of St. Paul's, and I think I shall have proved myself a Donne at all points. The truth is, that whatever I am, I love you all.

I account it a happy event, that brought the dear boy, your Nephew, to my knowledge, and that breaking through all the restraints which his natural bashfulness imposed on him, he determined to find me out. He is amiable to a degree, that I have seldom seen, and I often long with impatience to see him again.

My

My dearest Cousin, what shall I say in answer to your affectionate invitation? I *must* say this, I cannot come now, nor soon, and I wish with all my heart I could. But I will tell you what may be done, perhaps, and it will answer to us just as well: you, and Mr. Bodham, can come to Weston, can you not? The summer is at hand, there are roads and wheels to bring you, and you are neither of you translating Homer. I am crazed that I cannot ask you altogether, for want of house-room, but for Mr. Bodham, and yourself, we have good room, and equally good for any third, in the shape of a Donne, whether named Hewitt, Bodham, Balls, or Johnson, or by whatever name distinguished. Mrs. Hewitt has particular claims upon me; she was my play-fellow at Berkhamstead, and has a share in my warmest affections. Pray tell her so! Neither do I at all forget my Cousin Harriet. She and I have been many a time merry at Catfield, and have made the Parsonage ring with laughter. Give my love to her. Assure yourself, my dearest Cousin, that I shall receive you as if you were my Sister, and Mrs. Unwin is, for my sake, prepared to do the same. When she has seen you, she will love you for your own.

I am much obliged to Mr. Bodham, for his kindness to my Homer, and with my love to you all, and with Mrs. Unwin's kind respects, am,

My dear, dear Rose,

Ever yours,

W. C.

P. S.

P. S. I mourn the death of your poor brother Castres, whom I should have seen had he lived, and should have seen with the greatest pleasure. He was an amiable boy, and I was very fond of him.

Still another P. S.—I find on consulting Mrs. Unwin, that I have under-rated our capabilities, and that we have not only room for you, and Mr. Bodham, but for two of your sex, and even for your Nephew into the bargain. We shall be happy to have it all so occupied.

Your Nephew tells me that his Sister, in the qualities of the mind, resembles you; that is enough to make her dear to me, and I beg you will assure her that she is so. Let it not be long before I hear from you.



LETTER CXXV.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esqr.

Weston, Feb. 28, 1790.

MY DEAR COUSIN JOHN,

I have much wished to hear from you, and though you are welcome to write to Mrs. Unwin as often as you please, I wish myself to be numbered among your correspondents.

I shall find time to answer you, doubt it not! be as busy as we
may,

may, we can always find time to do what is agreeable to us. By the way, had you a Letter from Mrs. Unwin? I am witness that she addressed one to you before you went into Norfolk; but your mathematico-poetical head forgot to acknowledge the receipt of it.

I was never more pleased in my life than to learn, and to learn from herself, that my dearest Rose* is still alive. Had she not engaged me to love her by the sweetness of her character, when a child, she would have done it effectually now, by making me the most acceptable present in the world, my own dear Mother's picture. I am perhaps, the only person living who remembers her, but I remember her well, and can attest on my own knowledge, the truth of the resemblance. Amiable and elegant as the countenance is, such exactly was her own; she was one of the tenderest parents, and so just a copy of her is, therefore, to me invaluable.

I wrote yesterday to my Rose, to tell her all this, and to thank her for her kindness in sending it! neither do I forget your kindness who intimated to her that I should be happy to possess it.

She invites me into Norfolk, but alas! she might as well invite the house in which I dwell; for all other considerations and impediments apart, how is it possible that a translator of Homer should lumber to such a distance? But though I cannot comply

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with

* Mrs. Ann Bodham.

with her kind invitation, I have made myself the best amends in my power, by inviting her, and all the family of Donne's, to Weston. Perhaps we could not accommodate them all at once, but in succession we could ; and can at any time find room for five, three of them being females, and one a married one. You are a mathematician ; tell me then how five persons can be lodged in three beds ? (two males and three females,) and I shall have good hope that you will proceed a senior optime. It would make me happy to see our house so furnished. As to yourself, whom I know to be a *sub-scalarian*, or, a man that sleeps under the stairs, I should have no objection at all, neither could you, possibly, have any yourself, to the garret, as a place in which you might be disposed of with great felicity of accommodation.

I thank you much for your services in the transcribing way, and would by no means have you despair of an opportunity to serve me in the same way yet again ; write to me soon, and tell me when I shall see you,

I have not said the half that I have to say ; but breakfast is at hand, which always terminates my Epistles,

What have you done with your Poem ? The trimming that it procured you here has not, I hope, put you out of conceit with it entirely ; you are more than equal to the alteration that it needs. Only remember, that in writing, perspicuity is always more than
half

half the battle. The want of it is the ruin of more than half the poetry that is published. A meaning that does not stare you in the face, is as bad as no meaning; because nobody will take the pains to poke for it. So now adieu for the present. Beware of killing yourself with problems, for if you do, you will never live to be another Sir Isaac.

Mrs. Unwin's affectionate remembrances attend you; Lady Hesketh is much disposed to love you; perhaps most who know you have some little tendency the same way.

W. C.

LETTER CXXVI.

To Lady HESKETH,

The Lodge, March 8, 1790.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I thank thee much, and oft, for negotiating so well this poetical concern with Mrs. ———, and for sending me her opinion in her own hand. I should be unreasonable indeed, not to be highly gratified by it; and I like it the better for being modestly expressed. It is, as you know, and it shall be some months longer, my daily business to polish and improve what is done, that when the whole shall appear, she may find her expectations answered. I am glad also that thou didst send her the

sixteenth Odyssey, though, as I said before, I know not at all at present, whereof it is made; but I am sure that thou wouldst not have sent it, hadst thou not conceived a good opinion of it thyself, and thought that it would do me credit. It was very kind in thee to sacrifice to this Minerva on my account.

For my sentiments on the subject of the Test Act, I cannot do better than refer thee to my Poem, intituled and called "Expostulation." I have there expressed myself not much in its favour; considering it in a religious view; and in a political one, I like it not a jot the better. I am neither Tory, nor High Churchman, but an old Whig, as my Father was before me; and an enemy, consequently, to all tyrannical impositions.

Mrs. Unwin bids me return thee many thanks for thy inquiries so kindly made concerning her health. She is a little better than of late, but has been ill continually ever since last November. Every thing that could try patience, and submission, she has had, and her submission and patience have answered in the trial, though mine, on her account, have often failed sadly.

I have a Letter from Johnson, who tells me that he has sent his transcript to you, begging at the same time more copy. Let him have it by all means; he is an industrious youth, and I love him dearly. I told him that you are disposed to love him a little.

A new

A new Poem is born on the receipt of my Mother's picture. Thou shalt have it.

W. C.

LETTER CXXVII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

The Lodge, March 11, 1790.

I was glad to hear from you, for a line from you gives me always much pleasure, but was not much gladdened by the contents of your Letter. The state of your health, which I have learned more accurately perhaps from my Cousin, except in this last instance, than from yourself, has rather alarmed me, and even she has collected her information upon that subject more from your looks, than from your own acknowledgements. To complain much, and often, of our indispositions, does not always insure the pity of the hearer, perhaps sometimes forfeits it, but to dissemble them altogether, or at least to suppress the worst, is attended, ultimately, with an inconvenience greater still; the secret will out at last, and our friends unprepared to receive it, are doubly distressed about us. In saying this, I squint a little at Mrs. Unwin, who will read it; it is with her, as with you, the only subject on which she practices any dissimulation at all; the consequence is, that when she is much indisposed, I never believe myself

myself in possession of the whole truth, live in constant expectation of hearing something worse, and at the long run am seldom disappointed. It seems therefore, as on all other occasions, so even in this, the better course on the whole to appear what we are, not to lay the fears of our friends asleep by cheerful looks which do not probably belong to us, or by Letters written as if we were well, when in fact we are very much otherwise. On condition however, that you act differently toward me for the future, I will pardon the past, and she may gather from my clemency shewn to you, some hopes, on the same conditions, of similar clemency to herself.

W. C.

LETTER CXXVIII.

To Mrs, THROCKMORTON.

The Lodge, March 21, 1790.

MY DEAREST MADAM,

I shall only observe on the subject of your absence, that you have stretched it since you went, and have made it a week longer. Weston is sadly *unked* without you ; and here are two of us, who will be heartily glad to see you again. I believe you are happier at home than any where, which is a comfortable belief to your neighbours, because it affords assurance, that since you are neither likely to ramble for pleasure, nor to meet
with

with any avocations of business, while Weston shall continue to be your home, it will not often want you.

The two first books of my Iliad have been submitted to the inspection and scrutiny of a great Critic of your sex, at the instance of my Cousin, as you may suppose. The lady is mistress of more tongues than a few; (it is to be hoped she is single) and particularly she is mistress of the Greek. She returned them with expressions, that if any thing could make a Poet prouder than all Poets naturally are, would have made me so. I tell you this, because I know that you all interest yourselves in the success of the said Iliad.

My periwig is arrived, and is the very perfection of all periwigs, having only one fault; which is, that my head will only go into the first half of it, the other half, or the upper part of it, continuing still unoccupied. My artist in this way at Olney has however undertaken to make the whole of it tenantable; and then I shall be twenty years younger than you have ever seen me.

I heard of your birth-day very early in the morning; the news came from the steeple.

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER CXXIX.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge; March 22, 1790.

I rejoice, my dearest Cousin, that my mss. have roamed the earth so successfully, and have met with no disaster. The single book excepted, that went to the bottom of the Thames, and rose again, they have been fortunate without exception. I am not superstitious, but have nevertheless as good a right to believe that adventure an omen, and a favourable one, as Swift had to interpret, as he did, the loss of a fine fish, which he had no sooner laid on the bank, than it flounced into the water again. This, he tells us himself, he always considered as a type of his future disappointments; and why may I not as well consider the marvellous recovery of my lost book from the bottom of the Thames, as typical of its future prosperity? To say the truth, I have no fears now about the success of my Translation, though in time past I have had many. I knew there was a style somewhere, could I but find it, in which Homer ought to be rendered, and which alone would suit him. Long time I blundered about it, ere I could attain to any decided judgment on the matter: at first I was betrayed by a desire of accommodating my language to the simplicity of his, into much of the quaintness that belonged to our writers of the fifteenth century. In the course of many revisals I have delivered myself from

from this evil, I believe, entirely ; but I have done it slowly, and as a man separates himself from his mistress when he is going to marry. I had so strong a predilection in favour of this style, at first, that I was crazed to find that others were not as much enamoured with it as myself. At every passage of that sort which I obliterated, I groaned bitterly, and said to myself, I am spoiling my work to please those who have no taste for the simple graces of antiquity. But in measure, as I adopted a more modern phraseology, I became a convert to their opinion ; and in the last revisal, which I am now making, am not sensible of having spared a single expression of the obsolete kind. I see my Work so much improved by this alteration, that I am filled with wonder at my own backwardness to assent to the necessity of it ; and the more when I consider that Milton, with whose manner I account myself intimately acquainted, is never quaint, never twangs through the nose, but is every where grand and elegant, without resorting to musty antiquity for his beauties. On the contrary, he took a long stride forward, left the language of his own day far behind him, and anticipated the expressions of a century yet to come.

I have now, as I said, no longer any doubt of the event, but I will give thee a shilling if thou wilt tell me what I shall say in my Preface. It is an affair of much delicacy, and I have as many opinions about it as there are whims in a weather-cock,

Send my mss. and thine when thou wilt. In a day or two I shall enter on the last Iliad, when I have finished it I shall give the Odyssey one more reading, and shall, therefore, shortly have occasion for the copy in thy possession ; but you see that there is no need to hurry.

I leave the little space for Mrs. Unwin's use, who means, I believe, to occupy it, and am evermore thine most truly.

W. C.

Postscript in the hand of Mrs. Unwin.

You cannot imagine how much your Ladyship would oblige your unworthy servant, if you would be so good to let me know in what point I differ from you. All that at present I can say is, that I will readily sacrifice my own opinion, unless I can give you a substantial reason for adhering to it.

LETTER CXXX.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esqr.

Weston, March 23, 1790.

Your mss. arrived safe in New Norfolk Street, and I am much obliged to you for your labours. Were you now at Weston I could furnish you with employment for
some

some weeks, and shall perhaps be equally able to do it in summer, for I have lost my best amanuensis in this place, Mr. George Throckmorton, who is gone to Bath.

You are a man to be envied, who have never read the Odyssey, which is one of the most amusing story-books in the world. There is also much of the finest poetry in the world to be found in it, notwithstanding all that Longinus has insinuated to the contrary. His comparison of the Iliad and Odyssey to the meridian, and to the declining sun, is pretty, but I am persuaded, not just. The prettiness of it seduced him; he was otherwise too judicious a reader of Homer to have made it. I can find in the latter no symptoms of impaired ability, none of the effects of age; on the contrary, it seems to me a certainty, that Homer, had he written the Odyssey in his youth, could not have written it better; and if the Iliad in his old age, that he would have written it just as well. A critic would tell me, that instead of *written* should have said *composed*. Very likely—but I am not writing to one of that snarling generation.

My Boy, I long to see thee again. It has happened some way or other, that Mrs. Unwin and I have conceived a great affection for thee. That I should, is the less to be wondered at, (because thou art a shred of my own Mother); neither is the wonder great, that she should fall into the same predicament: for she loves every thing that I love. You will observe, that your own personal right to be

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beloved

beloved makes no part of the consideration. There is nothing that I touch with so much tenderness as the vanity of a young man; because, I know how extremely susceptible he is of impressions that might hurt him in that particular part of his composition. If you should ever prove a coxcomb, from which character you stand just now at a greater distance than any young man I know, it shall never be said that I have made you one; no, you will gain nothing by me but the honour of being much valued by a poor Poet, who can do you no good while he lives, and has nothing to leave you when he dies. If you can be contented to be dear to me on these conditions, so you shall; but other terms, more advantageous than these, or more inviting, none have I to propose.

Farewell. Puzzle not yourself about a subject when you write to either of us, every thing is subject enough from those we love.

W. C.

LETTER CXXXI.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esqr.

Weston, April 17, 1790.

Your Letter, that now lies before me, is almost three week old, and therefore of full age to receive an answer, which it shall have without delay, if the interval between
the

the present moment and that of breakfast should prove sufficient for the purpose.

Yours to Mrs. Unwin was received yesterday, for which she will thank you in due time. I have also seen, and have now in my desk, your Letter to Lady Hesketh ; she sent it thinking that it would divert me ; in which she was not mistaken. I shall tell her when I write to her next, that you long to receive a line from her. Give yourself no trouble on the subject of the politic device you saw good to recur to, when you presented me with your Manuscript ; it was an innocent deception, at least it could harm nobody save yourself ; an effect which it did not fail to produce ; and since the punishment followed it so closely, by me at least, it may very well be forgiven. You ask, how I can tell that you are not addicted to practices of the deceptive kind ? And certainly, if the little time that I have had to study you, were alone to be considered, the question would not be unreasonable ; but in general a man who reaches my years, finds that

“ Long experience does attain

“ To something like prophetic strain.”

I am very much of Lavater's opinion, and persuaded that faces are as legible as books ; only with these circumstances to recommend them to our perusal, that they are read in much less time, and are much less likely to deceive us. Yours gave me a favourable impression of you the moment I beheld it ; and though I shall
not

not tell you in particular what I saw in it, for reasons mentioned in my last, I will add, that I have observed in you nothing since, that has not confirmed the opinion I then formed in your favour. In fact, I cannot recollect that my skill in physiognomy has ever deceived me, and I should add more on this subject had I room.

When you have shut up your mathematical books, you must give yourself to the study of Greek; not merely that you may be able to read Homer, and the other Greek Classics, with ease, but the Greek Testament and the Greek Fathers also. Thus qualified, and by the aid of your fiddle into the bargain, together with some portion of the grace of God, (without which nothing can be done) to enable you to look well to your flock, when you shall get one, you will be well set up for a Parson. In which character, if I live to see you in it, I shall expect and hope that you will make a very different figure from most of your fraternity.

Ever yours.

W. C.

LETTER CXXXII.

To Lady NESKETH.

The Lodge, April 19, 1790.

MY DEAREST COZ.

I thank thee for my Cousin Johnson's Letter, which diverted me. I had one from him lately, in which
he

he expressed an ardent desire of a line from you, and the delight he would feel on receiving it. I know not whether you will have the charity to satisfy his longings, but mention the matter, thinking it possible that you may. A Letter from a lady to a youth immersed in mathematics must be singularly pleasant.

I am finishing Homer backward, having begun at the last book, and designing to persevere in that crab-like fashion, till I arrive at the first. This may remind you, perhaps, of a certain Poet's prisoner in the Bastile (thank Heaven ! in the Bastile now no more) counting the nails in the door, for variety's sake, in all directions. I find so little to do in the last revisal, that I shall soon reach the Odyssey, and soon want those books of it which are in thy possession ; but the two first of the Iliad, which are also in thy possession, much sooner ; thou mayst, therefore, send them by the first fair opportunity. I am in high spirits on this subject, and think that I have at last licked the clumsy cub into a shape that will secure to it the favourable notice of the public; Let not —— retard me, and I shall hope to get it out next winter.

I am glad that thou hast sent the General those Verses on my Mother's picture. They will amuse him—only I hope that he will not miss my Mother-in-law, and think that she ought to have made a third. On such an occasion it was not possible to mention her with any propriety. I rejoice at the General's recovery ; may it prove a perfect one.

W. C.

LETTER

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, April 30, 1790.

To my old friend, Dr. Madan, thou couldst not have spoken better than thou didst. Tell him, I beseech you, that I have not forgotten him ; tell him also, that to my heart and home he will be always welcome ; nor he only, but all that are his. His judgment of my Translation gave me the highest satisfaction, because I know him to be a rare old Grecian.

The General's approbation of my Picture Verses gave me also much pleasure. I wrote them not without tears ; therefore, I presume it may be that they are felt by others. Should he offer me my Father's picture, I shall gladly accept it. A melancholy pleasure is better than none, nay verily, better than most. He had a sad task imposed on him ; but no man could acquit himself of such a one with more discretion, or with more tenderness. The death of the unfortunate young man reminded me of those lines in Lycidas,

*" It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
Built in the eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine !"—*

How beautiful!

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER CXXXIV.

To Mrs, THROCKMORTON.

The Lodge, May 10, 1790.

My dear Mrs. Frog*, you have by this time (I presume) heard from the Doctor ; whom I desired to present to you our best affections, and to tell you that we are well. He sent an urchin (I do not mean a hedge-hog) commonly called an urchin in old times, but a boy, commonly so called at present) expecting that he would find you at Buckland's, whither he supposed you gone on Thursday. He sent him, charged with divers articles, and among others with letters, or at least with a letter : which I mention, that if the boy should be lost, together with his dispatches, past all possibility of recovery, you may yet know that the Doctor stands acquitted of not writing. That he is utterly lost (that is to say, the boy—for, the Doctor being the last antecedent, as the grammarians say, you might otherwise suppose, that he was intended) is the more probable, because he was never four miles from his home before, having only travelled at the side of a plough-team ; and when the Doctor gave him his direction to Buckland's, he asked, very naturally, if that place was in England. So what has become of him, Heaven knows.

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* The sportive title generally bestowed by Cowper on his amiable friends the Throckmortons.

I do not know, that any adventures have presented themselves since your departure, worth mentioning, except, that the Rabbit, that infested your Wilderness, has been shot for devouring your Carnations; and that I myself have been in some danger of being devoured in like manner by a great Dog, viz. Pearson's. But I wrote him a Letter on Friday (I mean a Letter to Pearson, not to his Dog, which I mention to prevent mistakes—for the said last antecedent might occasion them in this place also) informing him, that unless he tied up his great Mastiff in the day-time, I would send him a worse thing, commonly called and known by the name of an Attorney. When I go forth to ramble in the fields, I do not sally, like Don Quixote, with a purpose of encountering monsters, if any such can be found; but am a peaceable, poor Gentleman, and a Poet, who means nobody any harm, the Fox-hunters, and the two Universities of this land excepted.

I cannot learn from any creature, whether the Turnpike-bill is alive or dead. So ignorant am I, and by such ignoramusses surrounded. But if I know little else, this at least I know, that I love you, and Mr. Frog; that I long for your return, and that I am, with Mrs. Unwin's best affections,

Ever yours,

W. C.

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LETTER CXXXV.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 28, 1790.

MY DEAREST COZ.

I thank thee for the offer of thy best services on this occasion, but Heaven guard my brows from the wreath you mention, whatever wreath beside may hereafter adorn them! It would be a leaden extinguisher, clapped on all the fire of my genius, and I should never more produce a line worth reading. To speak seriously, it would make me miserable, and therefore I am sure that thou, of all my friends, wouldst least wish me to wear it.

Adieu, ever thine—in Homer—hurry,

W. C

LETTER CXXXVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

June 3, 1790.

You will wonder when I tell you, that I, even I, am considered by people, who live at a great distance, as having interest and influence sufficient to procure a place at Court, for those who may happen to want one. I have accordingly been applied to within these few days by a Welchman, with

B B B 2

a wife

a wife and many children, to get him made Poet-Laureat as fast as possible. If thou wouldst wish to make the world merry twice a year, thou canst not do better than procure the office for him. I will promise thee that he shall afford thee a hearty laugh in return every birth-day, and every new-year. He is an honest man.

Adieu,

W. C.

LETTER CXXXVII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esqr.

Weston, June 7, 1790.

MY DEAR JOHN,

You know my engagements, and are consequently able to account for my silence ; I will not therefore waste time and paper in mentioning them, but will only say, that added to those with which you are acquainted, I have had other hinderances, such as business, and a disorder of my spirits, to which I have been all my life subject. At present I am, thank God ! perfectly well, both in mind and body. Of you I am always mindful, whether I write or not, and very desirous to see you. You will remember, I hope, that you are under engagements to us, and as soon as your Norfolk friends can spare you, will fulfil them. Give us all the time you can, and all that they can spare to us.

You

You never pleased me more, than when you told me you had abandoned your mathematical pursuits. It grieved me to think that you were wasting your time merely to gain a little Cambridge fame, not worth your having. I cannot be contented that your renown should thrive no where but on the banks of the Cam. Conceive a nobler ambition, and never let your honour be circumscribed by the paltry dimensions of an University. It is well that you have already, as you observe, acquired sufficient information in that science to enable you to pass creditably such examinations as I suppose you must hereafter undergo. Keep what you have gotten, and be content. More is needless.

You could not apply to a worse than I am to advise you concerning your studies. I was never a regular student myself; but lost the most valuable years of my life in an Attorney's office, and in the Temple. I will not therefore give myself airs, and affect to know what I know not. The affair is of great importance to you, and you should be directed in it by a wiser than I. To speak however, in very general terms on the subject, it seems to me, that your chief concern is with History, Natural Philosophy, Logic, and Divinity. As to Metaphysics I know little about them, but the very little that I do know, has not taught me to admire them. Life is too short to afford time even for serious trifles; pursue what you know to be attainable, make truth your object, and your studies will make you a wise man. Let your Divinity, if I may advise, be
the

the Divinity of the glorious Reformation : I mean in contradistinction to Arminianism, and all the *isms* that were ever broached in this world of error and ignorance.

The Divinity of the Reformation is called Calvinism, but injuriously ; it has been that of the Church of Christ in all ages ; it is the Divinity of St. Paul, and of St. Paul's master, who met him in his way to Damascus.

I have written in great haste, that I might finish, if possible, before breakfast. Adieu ! let us see you soon ; the sooner the better. Give my love to the silent lady, the Rose, and all my friends around you.

W. C.

LETTER CXXXVIII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

The Lodge, June 8, 1790.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Among the many who love and esteem you, there is none who rejoices more in your felicity than myself ; far from blaming, I commend you much for connecting yourself, young as you are, with a well chosen companion for life. Entering on the state with uncontaminated morals, you have the best possible prospect of happiness, and will be secure against a thousand and ten thousand

thousand temptations to which, at an early period of life, in such a Babylon as you must necessarily inhabit, you would otherwise have been exposed. I see it too in the light you do, as likely to be advantageous to you in your profession. Men of business have a better opinion of a candidate for employment who is married, because he has given bond to the world, as you observe, and to himself, for diligence, industry, and attention. It is altogether therefore a subject of much congratulation, and mine (to which I add Mrs. Unwin's) is very sincere. Samson, at his marriage, proposed a riddle to the Philistines. I am no Samson, neither are you a Philistine, yet expound to me the following, if you can.

What are they, which stand at a distance from each other, and meet without ever moving?

Should you be so fortunate as to guess it, you may propose it to the company, when you celebrate your nuptials, and if you can win thirty changes of raiment by it, as Samson did by his, let me tell you, they will be no contemptible acquisition to a young beginner.

You will not, I hope, forget your way to Weston, in consequence of your marriage, where you, and yours, will be always welcome.

W. C.

LETTER

To Mrs. BODHAM.

Weston, June 29, 1790.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

It is true that I did sometimes complain to Mrs. Unwin of your long silence, but it is likewise true that I made many excuses for you in my own mind, and did not feel myself at all inclined to be angry, nor even much to wonder. There is an awkwardness, and a difficulty in writing to those whom distance, and length of time, have made in a manner new to us, that naturally give us a check when you would otherwise be glad to address them. But a time, I hope, is near at hand, when you and I shall be effectually delivered from all such constraints, and correspond as fluently as if our intercourse had suffered much less interruption.

You must not suppose, my dear, that though I may be said to have lived many years with a pen in my hand, I am myself altogether at my ease on this tremendous occasion. Imagine rather, and you will come nearer to the truth, that when I placed this sheet before me, I asked myself more than once, how shall I fill it? One subject indeed presents itself, the pleasant prospect that opens upon me of our coming once more together, but that once exhausted, with what shall I proceed? Thus I questioned myself; but finding neither end nor profit of such questions, I bravely resolved to
dismiss

dismiss them all at once, and to engage in the great enterprize of a Letter to my quondam Rose at a venture.—There is great truth in a rant of Nat. Lee's, or of Dryden's, I know **not** which, who makes an enamoured youth say to his mistress.

And Nonsense shall be Eloquence in Love.

For certain it is that they who truly love one another, are not very nice examiners of each other's style or matter ; if an epistle comes, it is always welcome, though it be perhaps neither so wise, nor so witty, as one might have wished to make it.

And now, my Cousin, let me tell thee, how much I feel myself obliged to Mr. Bodham, for the readiness he expresses to accept my invitation. Assure him, that stranger as he is to me at present, and natural as the dread of strangers has ever been to me, I shall yet receive him with open arms, because he is your husband, and loves you dearly. That consideration alone will endear him to me, and I dare say that I shall not find it his only recommendation to my best affections. May the health of his relation (his Mother I suppose) be soon restored, and long continued, and may nothing melancholy of what kind soever, interfere to prevent our joyful meeting. Between the present moment and September, our house is clear for your reception, and you have nothing to do but to give us a day or two's notice of your coming. In September we expect Lady Hesketh, and I only regret that our house is not large

enough to hold all together, for were it possible that you could meet, you would love each other.

Mrs. Unwin bids me offer you her best love. She is never well, but always patient, and always cheerful, and feels beforehand, that she shall be loth to part with you.

My love to all the dear Donnes of every name—Write soon, no matter about what.

W. C.

LETTER CXL.

To Lady HESKETH.

July 7, 1790.

Instead of beginning with the saffron-vested morning to which Homer invites me, on a morning that has no saffron vest to boast, I shall begin with you.

It is irksome to us both to wait so long as we must for you, but we are willing to hope, that by a longer stay, you will make us amends for all this tedious procrastination.

Mrs. Unwin has made known her whole case to Mr. Gregson, whose opinion of it has been very consolatory to me. He says indeed it is a case perfectly out of the reach of all physical aid, but at the same time not at all dangerous. Constant pain is a sad grievance
whatever

whatever part is affected, and she is hardly ever free from an aching head, as well as an uneasy side, but patience is an anodyne of God's own preparation, and of that he gives her largely.

The French who like all lively folks, are extreme in every thing, are such in their zeal for Freedom, and if it were possible to make so noble a cause ridiculous, their manner of promoting it could not fail to do so. Princes and peers reduced to plain gentlemanship, and gentles reduced to a level with their own lacqueys, are excesses of which they will repent hereafter. Difference of rank and subordination, are, I believe, of God's appointment, and consequently essential to the well being of society : but what we mean by fanaticism in religion is exactly that which animates their politics, and unless time should sober them, they will, after all, be an unhappy people. Perhaps it deserves not much to be wondered at, that at their first escape from tyrannical shackles, they should act extravagantly, and treat their kings, as they have sometimes treated their idols. To these however they are reconciled in due time again, but their respect for monarchy is at an end. They want nothing now but a little English sobriety, and that they want extremely : I heartily wish them some wit in their anger, for it were great pity that so many millions should be miserable for want of it,

W. C.

LETTER CXLI.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esqr.

Weston, July 8, 1790.

MY DEAR JOHNNY,

You do well to perfect yourself on the Violin. Only beware that an amusement so very bewitching as Music; especially when we produce it ourselves, do not steal from you *all* those hours that should be given to study. I can be well content that it should serve you as a refreshment after severer exercises; but not that it should engross you wholly. Your own good sense will most probably dictate to you this precaution, and I might have spared you the trouble of it, but I have a degree of zeal for your proficiency in more important pursuits, that would not suffer me to suppress it.

Having delivered my conscience by giving you this sage admonition, I will convince you that I am a censor not over and above severe, by acknowledging in the next place that I have known very good performers on the Violin, very learned also; and my Cousin, Dr. Spencer Madan, is an instance.

I am delighted that you have engaged your Sister to visit us; for I say to myself, if John be amiable, what must Catharine be? For we males, be we angelic as we may, are always surpassed by the ladies. But know this, that I shall not be in love with either
of

of you, if you stay with us only a few days, for you talk of a week or so.—Correct this erratum, I beseech you, and convince us by a much longer continuance here that it was one.

W. C.

Mrs. Unwin has never been well since you saw her. You are not passionately fond of letter-writing, I perceive, who have dropped a lady ; but you will be a loser by the bargain ; for one Letter of hers, in point of real utility, and sterling value, is worth twenty of mine, and you will never have another from her till you have earned it.

LETTER CXLII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esqr.

Weston, July 31, 1790.

You have by this time, I presume answered Lady Hesketh's Letter ? if not, answer it without delay, and this injunction I give you, judging that it may not be entirely unnecessary, for though I have seen you but once, and only for two or three days, I have found out that you are a scatter-brain. I made the discovery perhaps the sooner, because in this you very much resemble myself, who in the course of my life have, through mere carelessness and inattention, lost many advantages. An insuperable shyness has also deprived me of many. And here again
there

there is a resemblance between us. You will do well to guard against both, for of both, I believe, you have a considerable share as well as myself.

We long to see you again, and are only concerned at the short stay you propose to make with us. If time should seem to you as short at Weston, as it seems to us, your visit here will be gone "as a dream when one awaketh, or as a watch in the night."

It is a life of dreams, but the pleasantest, one naturally wishes longest.

I shall find employment for you, having made already some part of the fair copy of the *Odyssey*, a foul one. I am revising it for the last time, and spare nothing that I can mend. The *Iliad* is finished.

If you have Donne's Poems, bring them with you, for I have not seen them many years, and should like to look them over.

You may treat us too, if you please, with a little of your Music, for I seldom hear any, and delight much in it. You need not fear a rival, for we have but two Fiddles in the neighbourhood, one a Gardener's, the other a Taylor's, terrible performers both!

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER CXLIII.

To Mrs. BODHAM.

Weston, Sept. 9, 1790.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I am truly sorry to be forced after all to resign the hope of seeing you and Mr. Bodham at Weston this year: the next may possibly be more propitious, and I heartily wish it may. Poor Catharine's unseasonable indisposition has also cost us a disappointment which we much regret; and were it not that Johnny has made shift to reach us, we should think ourselves completely unfortunate. But him we have, and him we will hold as long as we can, so expect not very soon to see him in Norfolk. He is so harmless, cheerful, gentle, and good-tempered, and I am so entirely at my ease with him, that I cannot surrender him without a *needs must*, even to those who have a superior claim upon him. He left us yesterday morning, and whither do you think he is gone, and on what errand? Gone, as sure as you are alive, to London; and to convey my Homer to the Bookseller's. But he will return the day after to-morrow, and I mean to part with him no more, till necessity shall force us asunder. Suspect me not, my Cousin, of being such a monster, as to have imposed this task myself on your kind Nephew, or even to have thought of doing it. It happened that one day, as we chatted by the fire-side, I expressed a wish, that I could hear of some trusty body going to London, to whose care
I might

I might consign my voluminous labours, the work of five years. For I purpose never to visit that city again myself, and should have been uneasy to have left a charge, of so much importance to me, altogether to the care of a stage-coachman. Johnny had no sooner heard my wish, than offering himself to the service, he fulfilled it; and his offer was made in such terms, and accompanied with a countenance and manner expressive of so much alacrity, that unreasonable as I thought it at first, to give him so much trouble, I soon found that I should mortify him by a refusal. He is gone, therefore, with a box full of Poetry, of which I think nobody will plunder him. He has only to say what it is, and there is no commodity I think a free-booter would covet less.

W. C.

LETTER CLXIV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

The Lodge, Sept. 13, 1790.

Your Letter was particularly welcome to me, not only because it came after a long silence, but because it brought me good news—news of your marriage, and consequently, I trust, of your happiness. May that happiness be durable as your lives, and may you be the *Felices ter et amplius* of whom Horace sings so sweetly! This is my sincere wish, and though expressed in prose, shall serve as your Epithalamium. You
comfort

comfort me when you say, that your marriage will not deprive us of the sight of you hereafter. If you do not wish that I should regret your union, you must make that assurance good, as often as you have opportunity.

After perpetual versification during five years, I find myself at last a vacant man, and reduced to read for my amusement. My Homer is gone to the Press, and you will imagine that I feel a void in consequence. The proofs however will be coming soon, and I shall avail myself with all my force of this last opportunity to make my work as perfect as I wish it. I shall not therefore be long-time destitute of employment, but shall have sufficient to keep me occupied all the winter, and part of the ensuing spring, for Johnson purposes to publish either in March, April, or May—my very Preface is finished. It did not cost me much trouble, being neither long nor learned. I have spoken my mind as freely as decency would permit, on the subject of Pope's version, allowing him, at the same time, all the merit to which I think him entitled. I have given my reasons for translating in blank-verse, and hold some discourse on the mechanism of it, chiefly with a view to obviate the prejudices of some people against it. I expatiate a little on the manner in which I think Homer ought to be rendered, and in which I have endeavoured to render him myself, and anticipated two or three cavils to which I foresee that I shall be liable from the ignorant, or uncandid, in order, if possible, to prevent them.

them. These are the chief heads of my Preface, and the whole consists of about twelve pages.

It is possible when I come to treat with Johnson about the Copy, I may want some person to negotiate for me, and knowing no one so intelligent as yourself in books, or so well qualified to estimate their just value, I shall beg leave to resort to and rely on you as my negociator. But-I will not trouble you unless I should see occasion. My Cousin was the bearer of my mss. to London. He went on purpose, and returns to-morrow. Mrs. Unwin's affectionate felicitations, added to my own, conclude me, dear friend, sincerely yours,

W. C

The trees of a Colonnade will solve my Riddle.

LETTER CXLV.

To Mrs. BODHAM.

Weston, Nov. 21, 1790.

MY DEAR COZ.

Our kindness to your Nephew is no more than he must entitle himself to wherever he goes. His amiable disposition and manners will never fail to secure him a warm place in the affections of all who know him. The advice I gave respecting his Poem on Audley End, was dictated by my love
of

of him, and a sincere desire of his success. It is one thing to write what may please our friends, who, because they are such, are apt to be a little biassed in our favour; and another to write what may please every body; because they who have no connection, or even knowledge of the Author, will be sure to find fault if they can. My advice, however salutary and necessary as it seemed to me, was such as I dare not have given to a Poet of less diffidence than he. Poets are to a proverb irritable, and he is the only one I ever knew who seems to have no spark of that fire about him. He has left us about a fortnight, and sorry we were to lose him; but had he been my son, he must have gone, and I could not have regretted him more. If his Sister be still with you, present my love to her, and tell her how much I wish to see them at Weston together.

Mrs. Hewitt probably remembers more of my childhood than I can recollect either of hers or my own; but this I recollect, that the days of that period, were happy days compared with most I have seen since. There are few perhaps in the world who have not cause to look back with regret on the days of infancy; yet, to say the truth, I suspect some deception in this. For infancy itself has its cares, and though we cannot now conceive how trifles could affect us much, it is certain that they did. Trifles they appear now, but such they were not then.

W. C.

LETTER CXLVI.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esqr.

My Birth-Day.

Friday, Nov. 26, 1790.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

I am happy that you have escaped from the claws of Euclid into the bosom of Justinian. It is useful, I suppose, to *every* man to be well grounded in the principles of jurisprudence, and I take it to be a branch of science that bids much fairer to enlarge the mind, and give an accuracy of reasoning, than all the mathematics in the world. Mind your studies, and you will soon be wiser than I can hope to be.

We had a visit on Monday from one of the first women in the world; in point of character, I mean, and accomplishments, the Dowager Lady Spencer! I may receive, perhaps, some honours hereafter, should my Translation speed according to my wishes, and the pains I have taken with it; but shall never receive any that I shall esteem so highly. She is indeed worthy to whom I should dedicate, and may but my *Odyssey* prove as worthy of her, I shall have nothing to fear from the critics.

Yours, my dear Johnny, with much affection,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER CXLVII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, Nov. 30, 1790.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I will confess that I thought your Letter somewhat tardy, though, at the same time, I made every excuse for you, except, as it seems, the right. *That* indeed was out of the reach of all possible conjecture. I could not guess that your silence was occasioned by your being occupied with either thieves or thief-takers. Since, however, the cause was such, I rejoice that your labours were not in vain, and that the free-booters who had plundered your friend are safe in limbo. I admire too, as much as I rejoice in your success, the indefatigable spirit that prompted you to pursue with such unremitting perseverance, an object not to be reached but at the expence of infinite trouble, and that must have led you into an acquaintance with scenes and characters the most horrible to a mind like yours. I see in this conduct the zeal and firmness of your friendship to whomsoever professed, and though I wanted not a proof of it myself, contemplate so unequivocal an indication of what you really are, and of what I always believed you to be, with much pleasure. May you rise from the condition of an humble prosecutor, or witness, to the bench of judgment.

When your Letter arrived, it found me with the worst and most obstinate cold that I ever caught. This was one reason why
it

it had not a speedier answer. Another is, that except Tuesday Morning, there is none in the week in which I am not engaged in the last revisal of my Translation ; the revisal I mean of my proof-sheets. To this business I give myself with an assiduity and attention truly admirable ; and set an example, which if other Poets could be apprised of, they would do well to follow. Miscarriages in authorship I am persuaded are as often to be ascribed to want of pains-taking, as to want of ability.

Lady Hesketh, Mrs. Unwin, and myself, often mention you, and always in terms that though you would blush to hear them, you need not be ashamed of : at the same time wishing much that you could change our trio into a quartetto.

W. C.

LETTER CXLVIII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esqr.

Weston, Dec. 18, 1790.

I perceive myself so flattered by the instances of illustrious success mentioned in your Letter, that I feel all the amiable modesty for which I was once so famous, sensibly giving way to a spirit of vain glory.

The King's College subscription makes me proud—the effect that my Verses have had on your two young friends, the mathematicians

maticians, makes me proud, and I am, if possible, prouder still of the contents of the Letter that you inclosed.

You complained of being stupid, and sent me one of the cleverest Letters. I have not complained of being stupid, and have sent you one of the dullest. But it is no matter; I never aim at any thing above the pitch of every day's scribble, when I write to those I love.

Homer proceeds, my boy—We shall get through it in time, and I hope by the time appointed. We are now in the tenth Iliad. I expect the ladies every minute to breakfast. You have their best love. Mine attends the whole army of Donnes at Mattishall Green assembled. How happy should I find myself were I but one of the party. My capering days are over, but do you caper for me, that you may give them some idea of the happiness I should feel were I in the midst of them.

W. C.

LETTER CXLIX.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esqr.

Weston, Jan. 21, 1791.

I know that you have already been catechized by Lady Hesketh on the subject of your return hither before

before the winter shall be over, and shall therefore only say that if you *can* come we shall be happy to receive you. Remember also that nothing can excuse the non-performance of a promise, but absolute necessity. In the mean time my faith in your veracity is such, that I am persuaded you will suffer nothing less than necessity to prevent it. Were you not extremely pleasant to us, and just the sort of youth that suits us, we should neither of us have said half so much, or perhaps a word on the subject.

Yours, my dear Johnny, are vagaries that I shall never see practised by any other, and whether you slap your ankle, or reel as if you were fuddled, or dance in the path before me, all is characteristic of yourself, and therefore to me delightful. I have hinted to you indeed, sometimes, that you should be cautious of indulging antic habits and singularities of all sorts, and young men in general have need enough of such admonition ; but yours are a sort of fairy habits, such as might belong to Puck or Robin Goodfellow, and therefore good as the advice is, I should be half sorry should you take it.

This allowance at least I give you—Continue to take your walks, if walks they may be called, exactly in their present fashion, till you have taken Orders. Then, indeed, for as much as a skipping, curvetting, bounding Divine, might be a spectacle not altogether seemly, I shall consent to your adoption of a more grave demeanour.

W. C.

LETTER

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

My Letters to you are all either petitionary, or in the style of acknowledgments and thanks, and such nearly in an alternate order. In my last I loaded you with commissions, for the due discharge of which I am now to say, and say truly, how much I feel myself obliged to you. Neither can I stop there, but must thank you likewise for new honours from Scotland, which have left me nothing to wish for from that country, for my list is now, I believe, graced with the subscription of all its learned bodies. I regret only that some of them arrived too late to do honour to my present publication of names, but there are those among them, and from Scotland too, that may give an useful hint perhaps to our own Universities. Your very handsome present of Pope's Homer has arrived safe, notwithstanding an accident that befell him by the way. The Hall servant brought the parcel from Olney, resting it on the pommel of the saddle, and his horse fell with him: Pope was in consequence rolled in the dirt, but being well coated got no damage. If augurs and soothsayers were not out of fashion, I should have consulted one or two of that order, in hope of learning from them that this fall was ominous. I have found a place for him in the parlour, where he makes a splendid

VOL. I. E E E appearance,

appearance, and where he shall not long want a neighbour; one, who if less popular than himself, shall at least look as big as he. How has it happened, that since Pope did certainly dedicate both Iliad and Odyssey, no Dedication is found in this first edition of them?

W. C.

LETTER CII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Feb. 13, 1791.

I can now send you a full and true account of this business; having learned that your Inn at Woburn was the George, we sent Samuel thither yesterday. Mr. Martin, master of the George, told him * * * * *

W. C.

P. S. I cannot help adding a circumstance that will divert you. Martin having learned from Sam, whose servant he was, told him, that he had never seen Mr. Cowper, but he had heard him frequently spoken of by the companies that had called at his house; and

† NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

This Letter contained the history of a Servant's cruelty to a post-horse, which a reader of humanity could not wish to see in print.—But the Postscript describes so pleasantly, the signal influence of a Poet's reputation, on the spirit of a liberal Inn-keeper, that it surely ought not to be suppressed.

and therefore, when Sam would have paid for his breakfast, would take nothing from him. Who says that Fame is only empty breath? On the contrary, it is good ale and cold beef into the bargain.

LETTER CLII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esqr.

Feb. 27, 1791.

Now my dearest Johnny I must tell thee in few words, how much I love and am obliged to thee for thy affectionate services.

My Cambridge honours are all to be ascribed to you, and to you only. Yet you are but a little man, and a little man into the bargain, who have kicked the Mathematics, their idol, out of your study. So important are the endings which Providence frequently connects with small beginnings—Had you been here, I could have furnished you with much employment, for I have so dealt with your fair mss. in the course of my polishing and improving, that I have almost blotted out the whole; such, however, as it is, I must now send it to the Printer, and he must be content with it, for there is not time to make a fresh copy. We are now printing the second book of the Odyssey.

E E E 2

Should

Should the Oxonians bestow none of their notice on me on this occasion, it will happen singularly enough, that as Pope received all his University honours, in the subscription way from Oxford, and none at all from Cambridge, so I shall have received all mine from Cambridge, and none from Oxford. This is the more likely to be the case, because I understand, that on whatsoever occasion either of those learned bodies thinks fit to move, the other always makes it a point to sit still.—Thus proving its superiority.

I shall send up your Letter to Lady Hesketh in a day or two, knowing that the intelligence contained in it, will afford her the greatest pleasure. Know, likewise, for your own gratification, that all the Scotch Universities have subscribed, none excepted.

We are all as well as usual; that is to say, as well as reasonable folks expect to be on the crazy side of this frail existence.

I rejoice that we shall so soon have you again at our fireside.

W. C.

LETTER CLIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

Weston, March 6, 1791.

After all this ploughing and sowing on the plains of Troy, once fruitful, such at least to my translating

translating predecessor, some harvest, I hope, will arise for me also. My long work has received its last, last touches; and I am now giving my Preface its final adjustment. We are in the fourth Odyssey in the course of our printing, and I expect that I and the Swallows shall appear together: they have slept all the winter, but I, on the contrary, have been extremely busy; yet if I can "*Virúm volitare per ora*," as swiftly as they through the air, I shall account myself well requited.

W. C.

LETTER CLIV:

To JOSEPH HILL, Esqr.

March 10, 1791.

Give my affectionate remembrances to your Sisters, and tell them I am impatient to entertain them with my old story new dressed.

I have two French prints hanging in my study, both on Iliad subjects; and I have an English one in the parlour, on a subject from the same poem. In one of the former, Agamemnon addresses Achilles exactly in the attitude of a Dancing-master turning Miss in a minuet: in the latter, the figures are plain, and the attitudes plain also. This is, in some considerable measure, I believe, the difference between my Translation and Pope's; and will serve as
an

an exemplification of what I am going to lay before you, and the public.

W. C.

LETTER CLV.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esqr.

Weston, March 19, 1791.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

You ask, if it may not be improper to solicit Lady Hesketh's subscription to the Poems of the Norwich maiden? To which I reply, it will be by no means improper; on the contrary, I am persuaded that she will give her name with a very good will, for she is much an admirer of poesy, that is worthy to be admired, and such I think, judging by the specimen, the poesy of this maiden, Elizabeth Bentley, of Norwich, is likely to prove.

Not that I am myself inclined to expect in general, great matters in the poetical way from persons whose ill-fortune it has been to want the common advantages of education: neither do I account it in general a kindness to such to encourage them in the indulgence of a propensity more likely to do them harm in the end, than to advance their interest. Many such phenomena have arisen within my remembrance, at which all the world has wondered for a season, and has then forgot them.

The

The fact is, that though strong natural genius is always accompanied with strong natural tendency to its object, yet it often happens that the tendency is found where the genius is wanting. In the present instance however (the Poems of a certain Mrs. Leapor excepted, who published some forty years ago) I discern, I think, more marks of a true poetical talent than I remember to have observed in the verses of any other male or female, so disadvantageously circumstanced. I wish her therefore good speed, and subscribe to her with all my heart.

You will rejoice when I tell you, that I have some hopes, after all, of a harvest from Oxford also ; Mr. Throckmorton has written to a person of considerable influence there, which he has desired him to exert in my favour, and *his* request, I should imagine, will hardly prove a vain one. Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER CLVI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

Weston, March 24, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You apologize for your silence in a manner which affords me so much pleasure, that I cannot but be satisfied. Let business be the cause, and I am contented. That is a cause to which I would even be accessory myself, and would
increase

increase yours by any means, except by a law-suit of my own, at the expence of all your opportunities of writing oftener than thrice in a twelve-month.

Your application to Dr. Dunbar, reminds me of two lines to be found somewhere in Dr. Young.

*“ And now a Poet’s gratitude you see,
“ Grant him two favours, and he’ll ask for three.”*

In this particular, therefore, I perceive that a poet, and a poet’s friend, bear a striking resemblance to each other. The Doctor will bless himself that the number of Scotch Universities is not larger, assured that if they equalled those in England in number of colleges, you would give him no rest till he had engaged them all. It is true, as Lady Hesketh told you, that I shall not fear in the matter of subscriptions, a comparison even with Pope himself. Considering, I mean, that we live in days of terrible taxation, and when Verse, not being a necessary of life, is accounted dear, be it what it may, even at the lowest price. I am no very good arithmetician, yet I calculated the other day in my morning walk, that my Two Volumes, at the price of Three Guineas, will cost the purchaser less than the seventh part of a farthing per line. Yet there are lines among them that have cost me the labour of hours, and none that have not cost me some labour.

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER CLVII.

To Mrs. THROCKMORTON.

April 1, 1791.

My dear Mrs. Frog, a word or two before breakfast; which is all that I shall have time to send you!

You have not, I hope, forgot to tell Mr. Frog, how much I am obliged to him for his kind, though unsuccessful, attempt in my favour at Oxford. It seems not a little extraordinary, that persons so nobly patronized themselves, on the score of literature, should resolve to give no encouragement to it in return. Should I find a fair opportunity to thank them hereafter, I will not neglect it.

*Could Homer come himself, distress'd and poor,
And tune his harp at Rhedicina's door,
The rich old vixen would exclaim (I fear)
" Begone ! no tramper gets a farthing here."*

I have read your Husband's Pamphlet through and through. You may think, perhaps, and so may he, that a question so remote from all concern of mine, could not interest me; but if you think so, you are both mistaken. He can write nothing that will not interest me, in the first place for the writer's sake, and in the next place, because he writes better and reasons better than any body,

with more candour, and with more sufficiency ; and, consequently, with more satisfaction to all his readers, save only his opponents. They, I think, by this time wish that they had let him alone.

Tom is delighted past measure with his wooden nag, and gallops at a rate that would kill any horse that had a life to lose.

W. C.

LETTER CLVIII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esqr.

Weston, April 6, 1791:

MY DEAR JOHNNY,

A thousand thanks for your splendid assemblage of Cambridge luminaries. If you are not contented with your collection, it can only be because you are unreasonable ; for I, who may be supposed more covetous on this occasion than any body, am highly satisfied, and even delighted with it. If indeed you should find it practicable to add still to the number, I have not the least objection ; but this charge I give you,

Ἄλλο δὲ τοι εἶρω, σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βαλλεὼ σῆσι.

Stay not an hour beyond the time you have mentioned, even though you should be able to add a thousand names by doing so ; for I cannot afford to purchase them at that cost. I long to see you, and so do we both, and will not suffer you to postpone your
visit

visit for any such consideration. No, my dear boy, in the affair of subscriptions, we are already illustrious enough ; shall be so at least when you shall have enlisted a College or two more, which perhaps, you may be able to do in the course of the ensuing week. I feel myself much obliged to your University, and much disposed to admire the liberality of spirit they have shewn on this occasion. Certainly I had not deserved much favour of their hands, all things considered ; but the cause of literature seems to have some weight with them, and to have superseded the resentment they might be supposed to entertain on the score of certain censures that you wot of. It is not so at Oxford.

W. C.

LETTER CLIX.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

April, 29, 1791,

I forget if I told you that Mr, Throckmorton had applied through the medium of ——— to the University of Oxford. He did so, but without success.—Their answer was, “ that they subscribe to nothing.”

Pope's subscriptions did not amount, I think, to six hundred ; and mine will not fall very far short of five. Noble doings, at a time of day when Homer has no news to tell us, and when all other

comforts of life having risen in price, Poetry has of course fallen. I call it a "comfort of life:" it is so to others, but to myself, it is become even a necessary.

These holiday times are very unfavourable to the Printer's progress. He and all his Demons are making themselves merry, and me sad, for I mourn at every hinderance.

W. C.

LETTER CLX.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esqr.

Weston, May 23, 1791.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

Did I not know that you are never more in your element than when you are exerting yourself in my cause, I should congratulate you on the hope there seems to be that your labour will soon have an end.

You will wonder perhaps, my Johnny, that Mrs. Unwin by my desire, enjoined you to secrecy concerning the Translation of the Frogs and Mice. Wonderful it may well seem to you, that I should wish to hide for a short time, from a few, what I am just going to publish to all. But I had more reasons than one for this mysterious management; that is to say, I had two. In the first place, I wished to surprize my readers agreeably; and secondly, I wished to allow none of my friends an opportunity to object to the measure,

measure, who might think it perhaps a measure more bountiful than prudent. But I have had my sufficient reward, though not a pecuniary one. It is a Poem of much humour, and accordingly I found the translation of it very amusing. It struck me too, that I must either make it part of the present publication, or never publish it at all ; it would have been so terribly out of its place in any other volume.

I long for the time that shall bring you once more to Weston, and all your *et ceteras* with you. Oh ! what a month of May has this been ! Let never Poet, English Poet at least, give himself to the praises of May again.

W. C.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE POETS.

*Two Nymphs, both nearly of an age,
Of numerous charms possess'd,
A warm dispute once chanc'd to wage,
Whose temper was the best.*

*The worth of each had been complete,
Had both alike been mild ;
But one, although her smile was sweet,
Frown'd oft'ner than she smil'd.*

And

*And in her humour, when she frown'd,
Would raise her voice, and roar ;
And shake with fury, to the ground,
The garland that she wore.*

*The other was of gentler cast,
From all such frenzy clear ;
Her frowns were seldom known to last,
And never prov'd severe.*

*To Poets of renown in song,
The Nymphs referr'd the cause,
Who, strange to tell, all judg'd it wrong,
And gave misplac'd applause.*

*They gentle call'd, and kind, and soft,
The flippant, and the scold ;
And though she chang'd her mood so oft,
That failing left untold.*

*No judges, sure, were e'er so mad,
Or so resolv'd to err ;
In short, the charms her sister had,
They lavish'd all on her.*

*Then thus the God, whom fondly they,
Their great inspirer call,
Was heard one genial summer's day,
To reprimand them all.*

“ Since

*" Since thus ye have combin'd," he said,
" My fav'rite Nymph to slight,
" Adorning May, that peevish Maid !
" With June's undoubted right ;

" The Minx shall, for your folly's sake,
" Still prove herself a shrew ;
" Shall make your scribbling fingers ache,
" And pinch your noses blue.*

LETTER CLXI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esqr.

The Lodge, June 15, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

If it will afford you any comfort that you have a share in my affections, of that comfort you may avail yourself at all times. You have acquired it by means which, unless I should become worthless myself, to an uncommon degree, will always secure you from the loss of it. You are learning what all learn, though few at so early an age, that man is an ungrateful animal ; and that benefits too often, instead of securing a due return, operate rather as provocations to ill treatment. This I take to be the *Summum malum* of the human heart. Towards God we are all guilty of it, more or less ; but between man and man, we
may

may thank God for it, there are some exceptions. He leaves this peccant principle to operate, in some degree against himself, in all, for our humiliation, I suppose ; and because the pernicious effects of it cannot, in reality, injure him ; he cannot suffer by them ; but he knows, that unless he should restrain its influence on the dealings of mankind with each other, the bonds of society would be dissolved, and all charitable intercourse at an end amongst us. It was said of Archbishop Cranmer, " Do him an ill-turn, and you make him your *friend* for ever ;" of others it may be said, " Do them a good one, and they will be for ever your *enemies*." It is the Grace of God only, that makes the difference.

The absence of Homer, (for we have now shaken hands and parted) is well supplied by three relations of mine from Norfolk. My Cousin Johnson, an Aunt of his, and his Sister. I love them all dearly, and am well contented to resign to them the place in my attentions, so lately occupied by the chiefs of Greece and Troy. His Aunt and I have spent many a merry day together, when we were some forty years younger ; and we make shift to be merry together still. His Sister is a sweet young woman, graceful, good-natured, and gentle, just what I had imagined her to be before I had seen her.

Farewell.

W. C.

The

The occurrences related in the series of Letters, that I have just imparted to my Reader, have now brought me to the close of the second period in my work. As I contemplated the life of my friend, it seemed to display itself in three obvious divisions: the first ending with the remarkable æra, when he burst forth on the world, as a Poet, in his fiftieth year; on which occasion we may apply to him the lively compliment of Waller to Denham, and say, with superior truth "He burst out like the Irish Rebellion, three-score thousand strong, when nobody was aware, or in the least suspected it." The second division may conclude with the publication of his Homer; comprising the incidents of ten splendid and fruitful years, that may be regarded as the meridian of his poetical career. The subsequent period extends to that awful event which terminates every labour of the Poet and the Man.

We have seen in many of the preceding Letters, with what ardour of application and liveliness of hope, he devoted himself to his favourite project of enriching the literature of his country with an English Homer, that might be justly esteemed as a faithful, yet free Translation; a genuine and graceful representative of the justly idolized original.

After five years of intense and affectionate labour, in which nothing could withhold him from his interesting work, except that oppressive and cruel malady, which suspended his hours of application for several months, he published his complete Version in

two Quarto Volumes, on the first of July 1791; having inscribed the Iliad to his young noble kinsman, Earl Cowper; and the Odyssey to the Dowager Countess Spencer; a Lady, for whose virtues he had long entertained a most cordial and affectionate veneration.

The accomplished Translator had exerted no common powers of genius and of industry to satisfy both himself and the world; yet, in his first edition of this long-laboured work, he afforded complete satisfaction to neither, and I believe for this reason—Homer is so exquisitely beautiful in his own language, and he has been so long an idol in every literary mind, that any copy of him, which the best of modern Poets can execute, must probably resemble in its effect the portrait of a graceful woman, painted by an excellent artist for her lover: The lover, indeed, will acknowledge great merit in the work, and think himself much indebted to the skill of such an artist, but he will never acknowledge, as in truth he never can feel, that the best of resemblances exhibits all the grace that he discerns in the beloved original.

So fares it with the admirers of Homer; his very Translators themselves feel so perfectly the power of this predominant affection, that they gradually grow discontented with their own labour, however approved in the moment of its supposed completion.—This was so remarkably the case with Cowper, that in process of time we shall see him employed upon what may almost be called
his

his second Translation; so great were the alterations he made in a deliberate revival of his work for a second edition. And in the Preface which he prepared for that edition, he has spoken of his own labour with the most frank and ingenuous veracity. Yet of the first edition it may, I think, be fairly said, that it accomplished more than any of his poetical predecessors had achieved before him. It made the nearest approach to that sweet majestic simplicity, which forms one of the most attractive features in the great prince and father of Poets.

Cowper in reading Pope's Homer to Lady Austen and Mrs. Unwin, had frequently expressed a wish, and an expectation of seeing the simplicity of the ancient Bard more faithfully preserved in a new English version.—Lady Austen, with a kind severity, reproved him for expecting from others what he, of all men living, was best qualified to accomplish himself; and her solicitations on the subject, excited him to the arduous undertaking; though it seems not to have been actually begun till after her departure from Olney.

If he was not at first completely successful in this long and mighty work, the continual and voluntary application with which he pursued it, was to himself a blessing of the utmost importance.

In those admirable admonitions to men of a poetical temperament, with which Dr. Currie has closed his instructive and pleasing

ing "Life of Burn's," that accomplished physician has justly pointed to a regular and constant occupation, as the true remedy for an inordinate sensibility, which may prove so perilous an enemy to the peace and happiness of a poet. His remark appears to be particularly verified in the striking, and I may say, medicinal influence which a daily attachment of his thoughts to Homer produced, for a long time, on the tender spirits of my friend; an influence sufficiently proved by his frequent declarations, that he should be sorry to find himself at the end of his labour.—The work was certainly beneficial to his health; it contributed a little to his fortune; and ultimately, I am persuaded, it will redound to his fame in a much higher degree than it has hitherto done. Time will probably prove, that if it is not a perfect representation of Homer, it is at least such a copy of the matchless original, as no modern writer can surpass in the two essential articles of fidelity and freedom.

I must not omit to observe one more advantage which Cowper derived from this extensive labour, for it is an advantage which reflects great honour on his sensibility as a man. I mean a constant flow of affectionate pleasure, that he felt in the many kind offices which he received, from several friends, in the course of this laborious occupation.

I cannot more clearly illustrate his feelings on this subject, than by introducing a passage from one of his Letters to his most assiduous

ous and affectionate amanuensis, his young kinsman of Norfolk!—It breathes all the tender moral spirit of Cowper, and shall, therefore, close the second division of my Work.

Weston, June 1, 1791.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

Now you may rest—Now I can give you joy of the period, of which I gave you hope in my last; the period of all your labours in my service.—But this I can foretel you also, that if you persevere in serving your friends at this rate, your life is likely to be a life of labour:—Yet persevere! your rest will be the sweeter hereafter. In the mean time I wish you, if at any time you should find occasion for him, just such a friend as you have proved to me.

W. C.

END OF THE SECOND PART,

AND OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

Seagrave, Printer, Chichester.

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